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A MARITAL VACATION

By Edward S. Van Zile

Author of "The Manhattaners," "The Last of the Van Slacks," "Clarissa's Troublesome Baby," Etc., Etc.

"Upon the whole, I incline to think that love stories, meaning tales of courtship, are altogether too numerous; it would be a beneficent improvement to write stories of marriage—of the influence of the married state in making or marring, as the case might be, the parties to it."—*Julian Hawthorne.*

CHAPTER I.

A NOVEL EXPERIMENT.

"THERE are only two interesting beings in the world," remarked Vanderheyden, eyeing the smoke from his after-dinner cigar in a confidential manner.

"Only two?" queried Mrs. Vanderheyden, over her coffee cup.

"Only two," repeated her husband, gazing into space.

"And they are?" asked his wife, still questioning her *demi-tasse*.

"They are a man with a future—and a woman with a past."

"How uninteresting you and I must be!" commented Mrs. Vanderheyden, musingly.

Vanderheyden glanced at her sharply, but she did not return his gaze.

"You're not a woman with a past, of course," he admitted, with polite emphasis.

"And do you imagine, my dear, that you are a man with a future?" asked Mrs. Vanderheyden, displaying her beautiful teeth for a moment. "It's possible that you may be able, some day, to do the nine holes in better than forty—but I doubt it. As for me, not having taken advantage of the past, I have neither a present nor a future."

"Are you referring to golf?" asked

Vanderheyden. "I didn't know that you played it this season."

"That was not the game I had in mind," explained his wife. "I was merely expressing my regret that I could not become one of the 'only two interesting beings in the world.' You, of course, do not know what it is to suffer remorse for an irreproachable life."

Vanderheyden gazed thoughtfully at the handsome woman across the board, fully appreciative of her brilliancy of mind and beauty of face, but not the less determined to follow the thread of their discourse to its logical conclusion.

"Have you ever tried to discover, Winifred, why you and I bore each other so abominably?" He put the question with the utmost gentleness of tone and manner.

"It's our own little problem-novel, isn't it, Peter Stuyvesant Vanderheyden?" cried his wife, a mocking note echoing through her laughing voice. "I've indulged in all sorts of theories to account for the dullness of the story. I suppose, after all, that collaboration is seldom successful either in fiction or in life."

"We don't quarrel," remarked Vanderheyden, puffing his cigar, musingly. "We have never quarreled."

"Do you know, Stuyve, I sometimes imagine that it would have been better

for us if we had had a tiff now and then? There is no marriage in heaven, I believe, because everybody there has such an angelic disposition."

Vanderheyden laughed aloud.

"That is an ingenious explanation, Winifred. And possibly I am a failure as a husband because my nature is too angelic. I'll admit, however, that it's a new idea to me."

"And the way you put it is new to me," commented his wife. "What I meant was that life has been too smooth for us both. Money, position, leisure—what have they done for us? If we didn't have brains—you needn't thank me!—we should have gone on very well. But, unfortunately, we've both of us got enough intellect to realize the utter futility of our respective lives. 'Mr. and Mrs. P. Stuyvesant Vanderheyden leave the city for Newport earlier than usual this season.' 'The P. Stuyvesant Vanderheydens will give a series of dinner parties and a costume-ball this winter.' 'Mrs. P. Stuyvesant Vanderheyden was one of the most strikingly gowned women at the Horse Show last evening. Her box was crowded with the smartest of the smart until a late hour.' It's so deadly tiresome, Stuyve! If you were only a counter-irritant! But you're not. Frankly, my dear boy, I'm utterly sick of the world, of myself, and—forgive me—of you."

"Come into the library, Winifred, and talk it over with me. Really, little woman, I haven't been so excited for a year past. There's something quite stimulating in telling the truth to each other, isn't there?"

The P. Stuyvesant Vanderheydens were presently seated before an open fire in their library, confronting with every outward semblance of satisfaction a cheerful blaze and an ominous crisis. The latter, but vaguely recognized though it was, had suddenly added a new zest to life. Vanderheyden was the first to speak.

"We'll hate each other after a time, Winifred, if we don't take heroic measures at once. Of course, our choice is limited. There are only two or three

things that we might do to—ah—relieve the strain, so to speak."

"For instance?" murmured his wife, pushing her chair further away from the fire.

"I might take to drink. I've thought of it at times."

"Vulgar—and not at all original," commented Winifred. "Besides, it wouldn't help me out at all."

"No," admitted Vanderheyden. "I was merely going over the list. Solution number one we'll scratch off. One—or even both of us—might have an affair."

He paused for a moment to allow Mrs. Vanderheyden to weigh the suggestion. Presently, she said:

"There's something in that, of course. But the chances are that we would both jump from the frying-pan into the fire. Furthermore, there's nothing restful about—what shall I call it?—a *real* flirtation. I don't believe I'm quite up to it, Stuyve."

"No?" queried Vanderheyden. "It would be rather wearing, of course. The effort at concealment would be a good deal of a nuisance. But my list is growing short. I have only one more suggestion to make."

"I hope that that is more feasible than the others," murmured his wife, wearily. "You have always been so conventional, my dear! If you had had a spark of originality in your make-up—" She sighed and gazed silently at the dancing flames in the fireplace.

"Originality!" cried Vanderheyden, scornfully. "It is the greatest of all foes to marital felicity. If you or I had had a touch of genius, Winifred, there'd have been a tragedy long ago. But there is, I think, the element of novelty in the only plan that I have left."

"What is it, Stuyve?" asked Mrs. Vanderheyden, gazing at him, gloomily. "If it isn't practical, I shall have nervous prostration. I've reached my limit, I think."

"Am I actually so unbearable, Winifred?" asked Vanderheyden, somewhat surprised at his wife's despairing mood.

"Honestly, my dear, I've tried to do my best."

"I know you have, Stuyve, but that doesn't alter the situation. It is very evident that you and I, with the best intentions in the world, have not been able to make a whistle out of a pig's tail. But don't keep me in suspense. If you really have in mind some reasonable solution of our problem, tell me what it is at once."

"My idea, Winifred, is not very ingenious. I had merely thought of suggesting a kind of marital vacation. Suppose we separate for a year! You go to Europe and I'll stay here—or *vice versa*. At the end of the year—well, we'd have something new to talk about for a week or so. We might possibly be glad to see each other again. I'm not sure of this, of course, but the experiment seems to me to be worth trying."

"There's a good deal in it, Stuyve," commented Mrs. Vanderheyden very thoughtfully. "The only objection to the scheme that I can see at this moment lies in the fact that people would say all kinds of horrid things about us."

"But they do, as it is," interposed Vanderheyden, argumentatively. "It's lucky for us that nature didn't put ears on our backs. There's no end of gossip about us—and there always will be. Do you realize, Winifred, that there are various publications—dailies, weeklies, and monthlies—that exist for the avowed purpose of keeping an idiotic public informed as to what you and I and our friends eat, drink, say, do, have done, or may do? As these publications have frequently printed sensational falsehoods about you and me, what difference does it make if they should publish a sensational fact about us for a change? Nobody would know whether it was true or false."

"I was not thinking about the general public," commented Winifred. "Of course, I don't care what the yellow journals say about us, Stuyve. But it wouldn't be pleasant to realize that our own set was making all kinds of horrid remarks about us. Understand me, my dear, I'm not rejecting your plan. I'm

merely bringing forward for discussion the only objection to it that comes to my mind."

"But, after all, Winifred, what our friends say about us doesn't count for much," remarked Vanderheyden, philosophically. "The most disagreeable part of it never gets to our ears. As for our—what shall I call it?—vacation?—there may be some wild talk at first, but we won't hear it, and if any of it gets into print, nobody will believe it. There won't be any scandal unless one of us should find freedom demoralizing."

"In that case, of course, we could make it permanent," suggested Winifred, coolly. "But I don't understand, Stuyve, that we're on probation for a year?"

Vanderheyden arose, and paced up and down the library nervously. He was a tall, good-looking fellow, clean-shaven, well-groomed, athletic in build, but carrying too much flesh. His face would have been handsome had it not been marred by lines of weariness and discontent.

"On probation?" he repeated, as he walked to and fro. "That's not my idea at all. *Carte blanche*, rather. There's to be no confessional at the end of our vacation."

Winifred eyed her husband keenly, as he paused and gazed down into her upturned face.

"How long have you had your great idea in mind, Stuyve?" she asked, suspiciously.

"It came to me to-night for the first time, Winifred. *Parole d'honneur*," he answered, impressively. "That I have made no plans," he went on, still looking down at her, "is proved by the fact that I give you your choice, my dear, between this country and Europe. Will you stay here, or go abroad?"

Winifred sat silent for a time, watching the fire, musingly. Vanderheyden, who had resumed his restless walk, wondered vaguely what was in her mind.

"What do you see in the flames, Winifred?" he asked, presently, his former question having remained unanswered.

"I see great cathedrals," answered the woman, dreamily. "snow-capped mountains, splendid cities, paintings, statues, old castles, vineyards, palaces, armies, peasants—a marvelous panorama that stirs my blood, Stuyve. Do you mind staying here, my dear? I'll go to Europe for a year. And I shall travel *incognita*. You won't object to that, will you, Stuyve?"

Vanderheyden had reseated himself and lighted a cigar. Glancing at his watch, he said:

"You may do just as you please, Winifred, for twelve months from this moment. It is now ten o'clock in the evening of September twentieth. I shall be seated here at ten o'clock just one year from this date, *Deo volente*. If you are not here by that time, I shall never expect to see you again. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly," answered Winifred, "and how about writing, my dear?"

Vanderheyden weighed the matter carefully before making a reply. Finally he said:

"We mustn't jeopardize the effectiveness of our experiment by making compromises at the outset, Winifred. We'd better not write to each other. A cable dispatch, now and then, will be sufficient."

CHAPTER II.

MADAME DE BEAUVILLE.

Peter Stuyvesant Vanderheyden, in the eyes of the observant public, occupied a most enviable position. Fate seemingly had provided him with everything desirable in life, excepting a career. And, after all, what is a career? In most cases, it is the rise and fall of a clever man who might have been happy if he had not been ambitious. Vanderheyden could well afford to dispense with a career. What could success in any line of endeavor bestow upon him that he did not already possess? Fame? Surely no man in New York was better known than "Stuyve" Vanderheyden. Was not that enough?

Riches, social position, these he had

possessed from birth. Furthermore, he had inherited good looks, a strong constitution, and an active, if not brilliant mind. The list of his personal acquisitions was sufficiently long. He had taken full advantage of his educational opportunities, and was better equipped intellectually than the majority of the men of his set. He had traveled widely and had managed to overcome, in his attitude toward the world at large, what may be called the provincialism of the chronic New Yorker. Vanderheyden had been known to assert that London is larger than New York, Rome more ancient, Paris more amusing, Vienna more fascinating, and Chicago more corrupt. It requires courage, ability, and a large fund of general knowledge, successfully to maintain these propositions against disputants inspired by local pride.

"Does New York, in your opinion, excel in anything, Stuyve?" Percy Stanton had cried, petulantly, at the New Netherlands Club one evening.

"Oh, yes," Vanderheyden had answered. "It's the one place on earth where they mix an absolutely perfect cocktail."

"Which statement is neither witty nor true," Stanton had growled, turning on his heel, and abandoning the field to his antagonist. But he had discharged a Parthian arrow in his retreat. "However, Stuyve, you know more about cocktails than I do," he had remarked over his shoulder.

Vanderheyden had watched Stanton's vanishing figure, musingly.

"What a phlegmatic, unromantic lot we are!" he had exclaimed, presently, glancing at Ned Armstrong, who had overheard his discussion with Stanton. "In the glorious days of our forefathers there would have been an exciting, perhaps bloody, sequel to my debate with Percy. Surely the rapier is a nobler weapon than the repartee."

"In the glorious days of our forefathers," Armstrong had repeated, satirically, "you and Percy, whom you really like, would have quarreled and fought, and perhaps killed each other, in an illogical, actually nonsensical way.

Bah! Romance didn't depart from the earth when civilized men abandoned smallclothes and smallswords. In fact, I believe that our own generation leads a more romantic existence than any of its predecessors. Kipling can stir my blood; Froissart can't."

Vanderheyden recalled Armstrong's words, as he entered his favorite club one afternoon two months after Winifred's departure for Europe. For several weeks he had frankly admitted to himself that, in so far as he was concerned, his marital vacation had been a failure. He wondered if Winifred was enjoying her freedom. How large a part she had played in his life, he had begun to realize, and, furthermore, how difficult it would be to replace the piquant flavor to existence that her departure had destroyed. He had employed various devices for killing time during the tedious eight weeks of his voluntary bachelorhood, but none of them had proved effective. This afternoon he felt desperately bored, and craved the stimulation of Armstrong's companionship.

"A man who enjoys Kipling and believes in the romance of the twentieth century may save me from suicide to-day," he remarked gloomily, as he came upon his friend in the smoking-room, and seated himself beside him.

"What's the matter, Stuyve?" asked Armstrong, sympathetically. "You look like the very incarnation of tragedy in search of a brandy-and-soda. If I am to save you from suicide, I'll begin my treatment by touching this bell."

"What I want to know, Ned," began Vanderheyden, presently, after he had sipped a stimulant and lighted a cigar, "what I want to know is, why you claim that we live in a romantic age. Could there be anything more prosaic than the daily routine of your life—and mine?"

"Where's Mrs. Vanderheyden?" asked Armstrong, with the brusqueness of an intimate friend.

"In Europe," answered Vanderheyden, curtly.

"To be gone long?"

"That's as it may be," replied Van-

derheyden, vaguely. "But what has all this got to do with the romance of the twentieth century? Let's confine ourselves to generalities, Ned."

"Forgive me, old man," cried Armstrong, repentantly. "I didn't mean to be rude, and I wasn't indulging an idle curiosity, I assure you. Just one more question, Stuyve. When did Mrs. Vanderheyden sail for the other side?"

"Just two months ago to-day. Anything more? I believe she took with her ten trunks, a pet poodle, two maids, and——"

"Come, that'll do. You needn't grow sarcastic, old fellow. Do you remember Horatio Talcott? Clever chap—went into politics and got appointed Minister to Monteravia? You've met him, I'm sure."

"I remember him well," said Vanderheyden, glancing at Armstrong, questioningly. His friend's bearing struck him as somewhat eccentric. "Have you been drinking, Ned?" he asked, bluntly.

"That question is in rather bad taste, Stuyve," commented Armstrong, flushing with annoyance. "But I'll forgive you, temporarily, as I want to get to the point at once."

"If it's not in bad taste, may I ask to what point you refer?"

"Geographically," answered Armstrong, patiently, "the point to which I refer is the capital of Monteravia—the charming little city of Petronople. Do you know the place?"

"I spent a week there a good many years ago," answered Vanderheyden. "I have a dim recollection of a beautiful harbor, high hills, and a white, well-built city. I had forgotten that Talcott was sent there, though I knew, in a vague kind of way, that he was in the diplomatic service."

"Were you presented at court while you were at Petronople?" asked Armstrong, eagerly.

"Am I on the stand?" returned Vanderheyden, in protest and perplexity. "Is this a cross-examination?"

"Perhaps it may turn out a song, perhaps turn out a sermon," quoted his friend, good-naturedly. "Was the

present king—what's his name—Alexis III.—on the throne at that time?"

"No," answered Vanderheyden, succumbing to Armstrong's persistence. "His father was still alive. I met the old gentleman. The heir-apparent was in England, I believe. I have a dim idea that he was quite a lively boy."

Armstrong was gazing at a letter that he had removed from its envelope while Vanderheyden was speaking.

"Listen to this, Stuyve," he said, presently. "It is from Talcott, who writes to me unofficially, excusing himself upon the ground of our former acquaintanceship—which, by the way, was slight enough."

"You will do me a great favor," he says, 'if you will take sufficient interest in the gossip of our little capital to answer the questions that I have put to you, directly or indirectly, in this letter. This very beautiful American came to Petronople about a month ago and at once rented a palatial villa overlooking the bay. She calls herself Madame De Beauville, but I am sure that this is merely a *nom-de-guerre*. She is a New Yorker, I feel certain, and I know her face, but her real name has escaped my memory. Her manner toward me—politely cold—confirms me in my belief that she is maintaining an *incognita*, and is afraid that I may be able to identify her. I have described her outward seeming at the opening of this letter, but a word-picture is always misleading, and, therefore, I have made a pen-and-ink sketch from memory, which I inclose. It bears some resemblance to her face—enough for you, if she is, as I think, one of New York's inner circle."

"Now, my reasons for troubling you in this affair are not personal. State interests are involved in the matter. The king has fallen violently in love with this woman, and she could, were she ambitious, change the future of Monteravia by a word. The queen's jealousy has not yet been aroused, but gossiping tongues are busy, and there's mischief in the air. As you doubtless know, trouble in Monteravia would jeopardize the peace of Europe, and my

career as a diplomat would be ruined should the great crisis—that is bound to come eventually—be precipitated by an American woman in Petronople. This sounds selfish enough, but I find that my personal interests and the peace of Europe seem to be involved in the same exigency. More than one great war has been fought because some flirtatious king pushed his assumed prerogatives too far.

"At the risk of boring you, my dear Armstrong, I have given you the above details, hoping that you will be patriotic enough to aid me in identifying Madame De Beauville. May I ask you, as a great favor, to answer this letter at once, if you are able, either from my description or sketch, to identify the woman who is, at this moment, the very incarnation of Europe's peril."

Armstrong refolded the epistle, returned it to its envelope and his pocket, and glanced at Vanderheyden.

"Where's the sketch?" asked the latter, his voice betraying his effort at self-control.

Armstrong thrust a piece of drawing-paper across the table, like one who reluctantly presents an explosive to a friend.

One glance at the sketch was sufficient for Vanderheyden.

"It's Winifred," he exclaimed, hoarsely. Then he pulled himself together by an effort of will. "Talcott should have gone in for art, old man. He has genius, hasn't he?"

"I thought that it was Mrs. Vanderheyden's face," remarked Armstrong, coolly, "but I was not quite sure."

CHAPTER III.

THE PEACE OF EUROPE.

"You're a good fellow, Ned!"

"Yes? I try to be. The highest duty of a man in these latter days is to be a good fellow. But your praise, Stuyve, is somewhat unexpected and extremely embarrassing. I assure you that I hesitated some time before going into this

matter with you. I found myself in a very delicate position."

"I can see that, and I am somewhat to blame for making it harder for you, Ned. I should have told you before this that Winifred and I are taking a vacation. It is not a separation, you understand—merely a year's holiday. But I may say to you, old man, that I should never have proposed the scheme had I imagined that Winifred could disturb the 'balance of power' in Europe. Think of it, Ned! Two or three million men may be slaughtered because of a whim of mine! It would be ludicrous were it not so confoundedly tragic." Vanderheyden paused, and glanced at Armstrong appealingly.

"But Talcott may have exaggerated what he calls 'Europe's peril,'" commented the latter. "Think of the utter absurdity of it, Stuyve. The King of Monteravia is attracted by Mrs. Vanderheyden's charming personality. You can understand that readily enough. If she were actually a reckless adventuress—as Talcott, of course, considers her—there might be real danger in the situation. The Queen of Monteravia is so closely related to the Czar of Russia that a word from her might precipitate just the crisis that Talcott fears. But you and I know that 'Madame De Beauville' is merely amusing herself—simply endeavoring to kill the time that must elapse before your 'vacation' is at an end. She, of course, has no idea that the peace of Europe is a house of cards, to be overthrown by a touch of her finger. And all that we have as proof of her unique position is Talcott's word. I repeat, Stuyve, that the latter may have been too easily frightened, that he may have exaggerated the danger to the international equilibrium that he thinks he sees."

Vanderheyden had been listening intently to Armstrong's presentment of the case. After a time he spoke, weighing his words with care.

"As I remember Talcott," he said, "he is a man not easily panic-stricken. His success in politics and diplomacy has been due to his perfect self-control, his cool judgment and his thorough

knowledge of the world. He would not have gone to the length of writing to you, had he not been convinced that the crisis fully warranted such a step. With all its apparent improbabilities, the situation has developed logically enough. Winifred has been terribly bored—I'll admit that, Ned, in confidence. Chance has given her the opportunity of turning a crowned head, and I can't blame her if she has taken advantage of it. What I regret is that I am not there to flirt with the queen. That would be, of course, the most reasonable way of maintaining this 'balance of power' that keeps diplomacy awake o' nights."

Armstrong's hand went up protestingly. "Your flippancy is untimely—I might even say uncanny—Stuyve. There's a question at issue that must be answered. Should I, or should I not, reply to Talcott's letter?" He deliberately blew a ring of smoke into the air as a symbol of perplexity.

"The dickens of it is——" began Vanderheyden, and then fell silent for a time. "The fact is," he recommenced presently, "the fact is, that I'm in a very awkward position. Of course, I'm bound to respect Winifred's wish to remain unknown. You must not tell Talcott, Ned, who Madame De Beauville is."

"Certainly not," admitted Armstrong, emphatically. "That would not do at all. Neither would it help Talcott in his efforts to prevent a catastrophe. If the Queen of Monteravia is a jealous wife, it would make no difference to her whether her rival's name is Vanderheyden or De Beauville."

"That's true enough," remarked Vanderheyden, reflectively, "but it has just struck me that if Winifred thought that Talcott knew her real name and status she might leave Petronople at once."

"By Jove, old man, that's rather clever!" cried Armstrong, excitedly. "Suppose, Stuyve, that you should cable to her a message something like this, for instance: '*T. knows all. Move on. Stuyve.*' It would not be a polite dispatch, neither would it be true, for T. wouldn't know any more than he knows now, but your rudeness and lack of

veracity might save Europe from a bloody war. It's a great idea."

"But it's rather rough on Winifred, isn't it?" asked Vanderheyden, coldly. "'T. knows all. Move on.' You're a bachelor, Ned, but you have a bit of imagination. If you had a wife—not that you are worthy of one, of course—you wouldn't care to address her as if she was a shoplifter or a tramp. No, that dispatch won't do."

"You'd rather see all the powers of Europe at war, Stuyve, than send to Mrs. Vanderheyden an enlightening and effective message?" asked Armstrong, petulantly. "I think you are too squeamish, old man. It's not a pretty message, I'll acknowledge. It sounds like a quotation from one of Josiah Flynt's books. But you can't afford to choose your words daintily. Your dispatch, Stuyve, must be short, sharp, and to the point. Can you suggest anything better than mine?"

Vanderheyden sat silent for a while, pondering an annoying problem.

"After all, it's a study of character, Ned," he remarked, at length. "While Winifred was with me, I took her for granted, so to speak. Now that she has become an international menace, I'm striving to analyze my impressions of her personality. Whether your dispatch would have the effect that you believe it would, I have grave doubts. She is proud, rather stubborn, and can be more easily led than driven. If I should order her to leave Monteravia, the chances are that she would disobey me. And I don't feel at all certain that, even if she believed that Talcott had discovered her identity, she would abandon an amusing pastime before she had tired of it."

"Why don't you go to her at once, then?" asked Armstrong, curtly. "You could get to Petronople inside of ten days."

"But I promised her that I would remain in this country for a year," explained Vanderheyden. "I can't, in honor, leave here for ten months—and the fat'll be in the fire long before that. Furthermore, we were not to write to each other. There are only two courses

open to me, either to send a cable dispatch to Winifred or a friend of mine to Petronople."

Armstrong glanced at the speaker, and their eyes met.

"Do you want me to go to Monteravia for you, Stuyve? By Jove, it would be an adventure! Do you think I could save the situation?"

"Why not?" asked Vanderheyden. "You know Winifred and Talcott. You are in possession of all the facts. You realize the danger to European peace—perhaps to civilization itself—that the jealous Queen of Monteravia at present personifies. And, after all, it's your affair, anyway. Talcott wrote to you."

"Don't try to bluff me, old man," protested Armstrong. "If I go into this affair, it'll be from friendship to you, and, perhaps, an inclination to get a little excitement out of it. But I don't admit that I have any responsibility in the matter, that I am under any obligation to rush over to Europe because Horatio Talcott is in a panic."

Vanderheyden smiled. "You should rejoice, Ned, in the opportunity vouchsafed to you to perform a great feat in behalf of civilization. It is not given to every man, the chance to prevent a great war. Frankly, my dear fellow, I envy you your mission. Think of it, you may save a million lives by what you are about to do."

"Possibly," commented Armstrong, grimly, "and I may lose my own. An outsider who rashly meddles with the diplomacy of one of those buffer states stands a fair chance of bringing his promising career to a sudden end. I've heard that Alexis III. of Monteravia, despite his English education, has some old-fashioned ideas tucked away beneath his crown. But I'll take the risk, Stuyve, and try to save the peace of Europe upon one condition."

"What is it, Ned? I'll promise anything within reason."

"It's simply this, old man," said Armstrong, impressively. "If you should get a cable dispatch from me containing the one word, 'Come,' you are to break your promise to Mrs. Vanderheyden, and sail for Europe at once. Of course,

I shan't avail myself of this expedient unless I find that it is imperative. Do you agree to my condition?"

"Yes," answered Vanderheyden. "I agree to it reluctantly—but I cannot conceive of any stress of circumstances that should make my presence necessary in Petronople, whatever may be the outcome of your mission. However, you've taken a great load off my mind, Ned. We'll have just one more ball, old man, and drink to your success as a diplomatist. How soon can you sail?"

"To-morrow morning," answered Armstrong, standing erect. "We'll postpone the toast until later in the day. I've got a thousand things to do in the next few hours."

"Go and do 'em," cried Vanderheyden. "Meanwhile, I'll see about your tickets and stateroom, etc. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Yes, Stuyve," answered Armstrong, like a man who is striving to read the future while beset by the petty cares of the present. "Get me an *Almanach de Gotha* and a History of Monteravia—there's an English version, I believe. Cable to Talcott in my name: 'Letter received. Am coming to you.' Buy me a revolver—small calibre, and a box of cartridges. Get me a specimen of Mrs. Vanderheyden's handwriting—and her latest photograph, if you don't mind. That'll do for the moment, I think. Can you meet me here for dinner at eight? Yes? Good! and—*au revoir!* I must brush up my French and German on the way over."

Armstrong turned upon his heel and strode rapidly from the smoking-room, leaving Vanderheyden somewhat dazed by the rapidity with which the crisis had taken shape, but glad, upon the whole, that action had so quickly followed debate.

CHAPTER IV.

A LETTER FROM PETRONOPLE.

After Armstrong, clad in the unromantic garb of a tourist, had sailed for Europe upon a most romantic mission, Vanderheyden had endeavored vainly to find diversion in several varied pursuits.

He played golf, chess, billiards, and poker, but soon discovered that games were not designed for the relief of his special kind of mental worry. He presently acquired an unenviable reputation at his clubs.

"What's the matter with Stuyve Vanderheyden?" was a question frequently asked by his friends at this crisis in his life, and nobody could give a satisfactory answer to the query. There had come, apparently, a radical change to Vanderheyden's nature. He who had been cordial had grown brusque and retiring. He who had won wide popularity for his suavity and sociability had grown of a sudden petulant and self-absorbed.

Gossipy tongues began to wag behind his back. It was whispered that Vanderheyden had quarreled with his wife, and that she had run away to Europe in haste and anger. After a time, Armstrong's name was mentioned in this connection by the more reckless of the scandal-mongers, and several women, who had long been jealous of Winifred, assured their intimate friends, in the strictest secrecy, that Vanderheyden was about to apply for a divorce. Fortunately for the latter, his growing tendency to shun his former intimates had saved him from the shock of a most disagreeable revelation. Our peace of mind in this chattering world depends largely upon how little we hear of what our friends and acquaintances say of us.

Before many days had elapsed, Vanderheyden had abandoned all efforts at diversion and had acquired the habit of spending the larger part of his time in a secluded corner of the New Netherlands Club, smoking, reading, fretting, musing. He had made a small collection of Monteravian literature, and had found some relief to his overwrought nerves in studying the history of the reigning dynasty, the annals of the ancient city of Petronople and the significance of Monteravia as a chip upon the shoulder of a great and aggressive power. After a time these researches began to give him real pleasure, and in one moment of scholarly exaltation he had even con-

templated the project of writing a magazine article to be entitled "The Integrity of Monteravia Essential to the World's Peace."

But it was not often that Vanderheyden could quiet the exposed nerve of his egotism by the drug of closet-statesmanship. He had too much personally at stake in the situation at Petronople to be able to maintain the mental poise that is demanded of the essayist who would write illuminatingly upon contemporary international crises. When most absorbed in some significant phase of "the Monteravian question" he would suddenly glance up from the printed page and ring for a boy.

"See if there's any mail for me," Vanderheyden would say, brusquely, and, his letters having been brought to him, he would scan them eagerly, hoping to catch sight of Armstrong's chirography. Then, finding nothing from his friend, he would spend the next half-hour making minute calculations of time and distance and the chances of a letter from Petronople by the next incoming steamer.

A strange revelation had come to Vanderheyden during these restless days and long, feverish nights. He had not yet put it into words, but he realized vaguely that he was jealous of Winifred, that she was always at the basis of his conscious thought. "A vacation, did I call it?" he had said to himself, repeatedly. "A vacation, indeed! I've never been such a helpless, hopeless prisoner as I am now. I was never so emphatically married, so to speak, as I am at this moment. Mentally, I can't get away from Winifred. I'm like a man haunted by the ghost of the woman he has wronged. Winifred! Winifred! Good God! how lonely I am!"

Then his dark musings would assume a scarlet hue. The King of Monteravia! Confound him for an unprincipled, tyrannical, insatiable rascal! Had not fate provided him with more good gifts than a reasonable man had the right to demand? A throne, riches, health, a beautiful and affectionate wife, a potent voice in the councils of the mighty, why should this favorite of the

gods find his happiness incomplete without Winifred?

Such thoughts were torture, and Vanderheyden realized that in their indulgence he jeopardized his mental poise. But they constantly recurred to him, with additions or variations. Sometimes his hot jealousy would neglect the king to concentrate itself upon Talcott. Had not Winifred by her mad recklessness placed herself, in some degree at least, in the power of this cold-blooded, scheming diplomatist? And who was responsible, after all, for her peril? He himself—Stuyvesant Vanderheyden, an imbecile Adam who had deliberately suggested to Eve that they depart from Eden by separate paths that led into outer darkness. Fool of fools that he had been, for the garden had been beautiful and Eve the only woman on all the lonely earth!

There seemed to be no vagary in which his morbid fancy did not find unhealthy nourishment. As if Alexis III. and Horatio Talcott did not furnish it with sufficient poison, he found himself at times in a white rage against Armstrong. Winifred was in peril, and who had rushed to her defense? Her husband's bosom friend! Were not history and literature full of tales based upon this very *motif*? Were not the newspapers soiled daily with stories of the treachery of trusted intimates? But, Armstrong, loyal, true as steel, was not as other men! It was sacrilege to permit suspicion thus to eat its tainted way into the very heart of a perfect friendship!

Nevertheless, Vanderheyden realized that he had been weak and yielding at a moment when he should have taken fate into his own hands. It was true that he had given his word to Winifred to remain in New York—or, rather, America—for a year. But had he not been released from his vow by the mere hint that she might be in real danger? Nay, had he not been in duty bound to rush to her assistance when he had learned that she was surrounded by perils of which she was herself in ignorance?

Thus it was that Vanderheyden, sus-

picious of his best friend, discontented with himself, and, worst of all, doubtful of his wife, sat moping in the smoking-room one afternoon when Armstrong's eagerly-longed-for letter was brought to him. To Vanderheyden's great disappointment, it was much too short to cover the wide scope of his abundant curiosity, but what there was of it was full of meat. It would give him plenty of food for reflection and conjecture until its successor should arrive.

"Comfortable crossing and got here a day ahead of my calculation," wrote Armstrong, whose epistolary style had no literary flavor. "Talcott and I put our heads together at once. He had not exaggerated the unpleasant possibilities of the situation, worse luck. In fact, old man, Mrs. Vanderheyden—Madame De Beauville—has played the very dickens with the ancient and picturesque kingdom of Monteravia. There's an undercurrent of unrest and excitement in the streets of Petronople, and Talcott tells me that the situation at the palace is strained to the breaking point. And all this, as far as I can judge, without the slightest indiscretion or lack of good taste on the part of your wife. It seems to be a case of love at first sight on the side of the king, and I learn that Alexis III. is an impulsive and ardent wooer, with firm belief in the divine right of kings.

"Talcott seems to be a very good fellow. He is nervous and a bit rattled, for he realizes, more clearly than you or I can, how much depends upon a delicate manipulation of this unprecedented affair. He and I have had several consultations and a plan is gradually shaping itself between us that may bag the game we're after. I haven't time to go into details at this writing, for every hour of the day and night is taken up, but I can give you a general hint as to our line of procedure. There is to be a costume-ball at the palace to-morrow night, and Talcott will present me to the queen—who, you understand, is enraged at the idea of a court festivity at this time. She'd drape the palace in black, if she could have her way, and

execute Madame De Beauville in the public square. But Mrs. Alexis doesn't run this merry little buffer state. Aleck knows his business and what he orders goes through with a rush. And so it's a case of 'on with the dance,' and Mrs. Alexis must make the best of it. Furthermore, it is rumored that the king will dance a minuet with Madame De Beauville, and Talcott assures me that a sight of the queen's face will be worth the price of admission.

"All this is not very clear, of course, as I am writing at top speed and our scheme is not yet perfected in detail. Whether I shall reveal my identity to Mrs. Vanderheyden is not yet determined, but I may talk with her after I have had a heart-to-heart talk chat with Mrs. Alexis.

"Upon glancing over what I have just written, I'm afraid, Stuyve, that you will accuse me of treating an international crisis with impudent flippancy. Be assured, old fellow, that I was never more serious in my life. I realize fully what all this means to you, and what it may mean eventually to the whole world. Talcott is in dead earnest, and you needn't fear that we will make any mistakes, even though the humorous features of the situation may seem to appeal to me too emphatically. I'll write to you after the ball, or, perhaps, send you a cable dispatch if anything of great moment occurs."

Vanderheyden re-read this rambling, rather incoherent epistle, and then touched the bell and ordered a brandy-and-soda. Armstrong's letter, while it was thoroughly characteristic of the writer and rang true from the first word to the last, was not at all satisfactory to its recipient.

"Damn it!" muttered Vanderheyden, lighting a cigar, nervously. "Why did not they put a long-distance telephone under the sea? I'll have nervous prostration before the next steamer arrives from Petronople."

CHAPTER V.

A PLAY AND A PROMISE.

Vanderheyden, who had been noted as a child for his fickleness toward the

toys in his playroom, had developed at one period of his early manhood a fondness for the contemporary drama. He had gained his shoulder-straps as a first nighter by heroic calmness before more than one deadly play, but of recent years he had avoided the initial performance of even the most promising comedy, attending a theatre but seldom, and then only after a play had won its way to success.

But the veteran first-nighter never wholly overcomes his fondness for the smoke of battle. There is a fascination in the contest between a critical audience and an untried drama that appeals to the imagination, and, once felt, is never without its charm.

And so it was that when Percy Stanton approached Vanderheyden the Unsociable at the New Netherlands Club one evening his words may have appealed to a latent enthusiasm in the latter's distraught soul.

"You look like a man with his ear at a keyhole, listening for the crack o' doom, Stuyve. It won't do, you know! You've been getting onto my nerves for a week, and I won't stand for it. Now, I've got a couple of good seats for the New Century Theatre to-night, and I'm going to pull you out of your shell and set you up for a dramatic critic. It's the first public performance of a New York society play by Stephen Hatch, and you may be sure it's worth seeing. Hatch is the best of the bunch—good for any distance, from a curtain-raiser to five acts and an epilogue. Are you listening to me, old man? Do you hear what I say? You are going to the theatre with me—and it's time to start."

"Oh, is it?" growled Vanderheyden, standing erect, and gazing at Stanton with the eyes of a man who has been suddenly awakened from a reverie. "I'm going to the theatre with you, am I? I tell you frankly, Percy, that I don't like your domineering ways. But come on! I might just as well be bored at a theatre as at a club."

But, much to his amazement, Vanderheyden was not bored at the theatre. The new play awakened his interest at the start, and held it until the drop of

the final curtain. The playwright had told a dramatic story of contemporary metropolitan life in an original, striking way, displaying brilliantly his keen knowledge of human nature and his firm grasp of the technique of the stage. The coldest-blooded, most jaded critic in the audience was forced to acknowledge at the end of the evening that Hatch had won another great triumph, had added new laurels to his already overloaded brow. As they strolled back to the club, Stanton and Vanderheyden discussed the play from opposing points of view.

"It's clever," began Stanton, argumentatively. "I'm willing to admit that the workmanship is masterly. But the basic *motif*, Stuyve, is absurd. That first act, brilliant as it is, is almost ludicrously improbable. Imagine a man and wife calmly planning a temporary separation that shall either become permanent or bring them closer together again when it is at an end. And, then, their giving each other *carte blanche* and no questions asked! It's ridiculous! Of course, an audience becomes interested at once in the outcome of such an experiment, and the playwright has neatly cleared his first bunker. But a realistic drama, it seems to me, should be planted securely upon a foundation of human nature, not upon an original and striking situation that could spring only from the playwright's imagination. Taking the first act for granted, however, the play as a whole is great."

There had come to Vanderheyden's face an expression that would have puzzled Stanton had he seen it. Even as it was, his companion's voice struck him as peculiar.

"I have always had a feeling, Percy," remarked Vanderheyden, "that we are apt to be too exacting in our attitude toward novels and plays. We are inclined, I fear, to demand not only realism of our writers, but what I may call our own personal realism. We have a tendency to measure the circumference of art by the diameter of our own experience. Because you have never heard or read or imagined that a husband and wife had deliberately indulged in what

we might call a domestic holiday, or a marital parenthesis, you at once jump to the conclusion that Stephen Hatch has based a realistic play upon a romantic impossibility. I can't agree with you in this. There is no limit to the vagaries of human nature, Percy Stanton."

They were mounting the steps to the clubhouse and Stanton paused at the top long enough to say:

"Of course, Stuyve, I'll acknowledge that I am handicapped as a dramatic critic by the fact that I am a bachelor. But, to change the subject to a question of real importance, what'll you have for supper?"

"Look here, Percy," cried Vanderheyden, entering the clubhouse, and making straight for his letter-box, "if you'll wait until I glance over my mail, I'll rejoin you at once. A rarebit and a bottle of Bass are what I want. I have something to say to you that may change your views about several matters—including the play we've just seen."

There was nothing of special importance to Vanderheyden in his letter-box excepting a cable dispatch. He tore open the little envelope excitedly, and his face fell as he read the following tantalizing words:

"Ball great success. We hold trumps. Don't worry.—NED."

"Don't worry!" he growled, as he made his way toward the supper-room. "Confound him, does he think I'm made of gutta-percha?"

But, upon the whole, his mood was more cheerful, as he seated himself at a table facing Stanton, than it had been for some time past. He had been lured for a whole evening from his egotistic musings, and he felt grateful to Stanton for so heroically bearding a surly lion in his den and dragging him away from his self-absorption. As Armstrong had said, Vanderheyden really liked Percy Stanton and at this moment he felt in sore need of a sympathetic listener. It would be indiscreet, perhaps, to confide in Stanton, but what other alternative had he? The temptation to talk to somebody, anybody, about the absorbing drama of which he was in part a

spectator, and, in a sense, an understudy, had come to him of late with almost irresistible force. A sacrifice of good taste, Vanderheyden reflected as he glanced at Stanton's homely, wholesome face, is sometimes necessary for the preservation of a man's nervous welfare. "If I don't talk about Montevia to-night, I shall take to drink—and, as Winifred said, that sort of thing is vulgar."

"I'm going to tell you something in the strictest confidence, Percy," remarked Vanderheyden, presently, after they had been served with a rarebit and bottled ale. "You were right in remarking that your limitations as a bachelor handicap you as a dramatic critic. The fact is, old man, that the basic situation in the play that we saw to-night has its counterpart in real life—and I know it."

"You don't mean, Stuyve—!" began Stanton, gazing across the board in astonishment.

"But I do mean it," answered Vanderheyden, vaguely. "Now, you must not interrupt me, and I'll tell you the whole story. As I said, Percy, I'm speaking to you under the most solemn seal of silence."

Substantiated by documentary proof, Vanderheyden's tale proved to be of absorbing interest to his hearer. His "exhibits" began with Armstrong's letter, and ended with the cable message that he had just received. As the story had proceeded, Stanton's excitement had grown apace.

"It's simply immense, Stuyve!" he finally cried, with an enthusiasm that struck Vanderheyden as distinctly out of place. "But I don't see how you have had the nerve to stay here. If I were in your place, I should sail for Petronople to-morrow."

"What the deuce did you say that for?" cried Vanderheyden, petulantly. "It's the one thing that I didn't want you to say. Can't you understand that I'm fighting every hour of the day and night against an inclination to break my word? And, if I went over now, I might upset this scheme that Talcott and Armstrong have devised. I'd be a—what do they call it—a *persona non*

grata at the court of his majesty of Monteravia? You agree with me, do you not?"

"There are other things besides the drama that a bachelor is not fitted to criticise," remarked Stanton, pointedly. "And the tariff is not the only local issue in the world."

"Which means, I take it," commented Vanderheyden, discontentedly, "that if you were in my place, Percy, you'd not follow my general course of procedure?"

"I'll answer that question," replied Stanton, "when you tell me frankly, Stuyve, whether, if you could hark back a few weeks, you'd do just as you have done?"

"But there's no use crying over spilled milk," grumbled Vanderheyden, gloomily. "What do you suppose Ned Armstrong means by saying the ball was a success, and that he holds the trumps?"

"Hum," mused Stanton, lighting a cigar, "Ned would be very careful not to exaggerate the strength of his position, wouldn't he? It's a very cheerful message, as it stands. Possibly he has fascinated the queen. Alexis may be recklessly flirtatious, but, of course, he's jealous and the queen may be giving him a Roland for his Oliver—or, rather, an Armstrong for his De Beauville. Or Ned may have persuaded Mrs. Vanderheyden to go to Vienna or Paris or Constantinople. Whatever may be the case, he's a rattling good card player, and knows what it means to hold trumps."

"All of which is offered as a poultice, I suppose, to heal the wounds of my unrest," commented Vanderheyden, standing erect. "Well, I'm grateful to you, Percy, for your good will. You've been of great service to me to-night, I assure you. When my next letter comes, I'll read it to you."

"Thanks, old man," said Stanton, cordially, extending his hand to his friend, "but that's not enough. I want you to make me a promise, Stuyve."

"What is it?" asked Vanderheyden, coldly.

"It's simply this: If Armstrong sends

you the word 'come,' I want you to take me with you."

Vanderheyden's hand tightened in Stanton's grip.

"You're a good fellow, Percy. And it's a promise. If Ned sends for me, you shall go with me. Good-night!"

CHAPTER VI.

EXPOSED NERVES.

Vanderheyden awoke from the most restful sleep that he had enjoyed for several weeks and called to his man to mark time.

"Nine o'clock, sir—and a beautiful Sunday morning," answered James, evidently pleased at the cheerful note in his master's voice. Vanderheyden may not have been a hero to his valet, but the latter was fond of him, and had been much worried of late by his nervousness and low spirits. James, after the manner of his kind, was keenly observant, and had noted that Vanderheyden's melancholia dated from the hour of Mrs. Vanderheyden's departure for Europe. The valet longed for her return, being optimistic and light-hearted by temperament and greatly preferring sunshine to clouds. Vanderheyden had become of late the heaviest cross that James had ever been compelled to bear.

"Anything startling in the papers to-day, James?" asked Vanderheyden, as his valet stood ready to shave him after his bath. That his man was in the habit of glancing at the headlines in the morning journals before beginning his day's duties, Vanderheyden had long known. Sometimes, when in the mood, he found amusement in listening to his valet's comments upon public men and affairs, not infrequently obtaining therefrom a new point of view himself that was not without its value. James had enjoyed professionally a cosmopolitan experience and had acquired a surface knowledge of the modern world that gave real significance at times to his shrewd comments upon the passing show.

"There's nothing very exciting, sir, begging your pardon," remarked James, as if apologizing for the dullness of a

world that should have been more amusing. "Not that Hi goe very far, sir. There was a harticle in the *Tribune* that took hallow the time Hi could spare, this being Sunday morning, so to speak."

Vanderheyden, his head thrown back, and his chin raised, was not in a position to question James, but the latter, catching his master's eye, felt at liberty to continue his monologue.

"You see, sir, Hi was, hin a way, long connected with 'er majesty's foreign hoffice. Hi was valet to Lud Stratford hallow the time 'e was minister to Monteravia. With your permission, sir, Hi always reads hanything that comes from Petronople. Not that there's much of hit, Hi'm sorry to say, for a more hinteresting place—beg pardon, sir, what's the matter? Does the razor scratch you?"

"No, go on," Vanderheyden managed to say, clutching the sides of his chair with a rigid clasp.

"There's a letter in the *Tribune*, if you don't mind, sir, from a correspondent at Petronople. 'E says, hif my memory serves me, that there's great hexcitement in the city. That don't hastonish me, hof course. The Monteravians, sir, are a very hexcitable people. Beg pardon, sir! Haren't you well, Mr. Vanderheyden?"

Anxiety vibrated through the valet's softly modulated voice.

"Go on," muttered Vanderheyden, but whether his command referred to the shaving or the discourse, or both, James did not know. He resumed his duties as a barber, but presently caught again the gleam of an interrogation-mark in his master's eyes.

"Monteravia," went on James, thinking to quiet his master's increasing nervousness by turning his mind toward foreign affairs, "Monteravia, with your permission, sir, is a kind of hexposed nerve, so to speak."

"But the article," cried Vanderheyden, as James turned aside to restrop his razor.

"The harticle!" exclaimed the valet in bewilderment. "What harticle, sir? Oh, the harticle in the *Tribune*, you

mean! That's what I was a-quoting from, Mr. Vanderheyden. 'Monteravia is a kind of hexposed nerve,' says the special, "'is name, begging your pardon, sir, 'aving hescaped me. Hand there couldn't be a better description of Monteravia hif Shakespeare 'imself 'ad written hit. That's what she his, sir, begging your pardon for the repetition! Hexposed nerve is just the words that hexpresses the situation. Lud Stratford, when 'e was talkative, which was seldom, sir, used to say to me— Did you speak, sir? 'Urry! Hit's not possible for me to 'urry when Hi'm a-shaving you, Mr. Vanderheyden. But the job's most done, sir."

Vanderheyden groaned, and James hastened to resume the thread of his discourse, still inclined to the belief that a large dose of Monteravia would soothe his master's evident unrest.

"Lud Stratford was fond o' saying, sir, that when you touched the button o' Petronople you rang a bell in hev'ry palace on the continent. 'Is ludship 'ad a very pretty fancy. 'E wrote a sonnet to 'er majesty, the Queen of Monteravia, that was much hadmired. The king, Hi was given to understand, didn't happrove of hit, but he was young then and recently married, and didn't know much habout diplomacy, so to speak, sir."

"This is unbearable, James!" Vanderheyden risked a cut on the cheek to exclaim: "Will you never get through with me?"

"Just finished, sir. Sorry Hi couldn't do the trick quicker, Mr. Vanderheyden. But shaving a chin's like hany artwork, sir; to 'asten it his to mar hit."

While Vanderheyden was completing his toilet his curiosity increased apace. Finally he succumbed wholly to its influence and asked:

"Did you ever see Alexis III., King of Monteravia, James?"

"Frequent, sir. 'E was catering to the masses, so to speak, hat that time, and went habout in a free and heasy way that his ludship used to say was quite refreshing. 'E was a tall, 'and-some young man, and they did say has 'ow 'e——"

"That'll do, James," cried Vanderheyden, gruffly. "No scandal, please. And the queen? Is she beautiful?"

"She was then," answered James, guardedly. "She's 'ad troubles since then, I think, sir. The king's a bit of a rake, hand——"

"That'll do, James," snapped his master, most unjustly. "You may go. If I want you again, I'll ring."

The loneliness of his existence impressed Vanderheyden as he entered the breakfast-room presently, carrying the Sunday issue of the *Tribune* with him. He longed, yet dreaded, to read the article from Petronople to which James had referred. But it had seemed best to him to fortify himself with coffee and eggs before subjecting his treacherous nervous system to another severe strain. Somewhat to his surprise, and greatly to his satisfaction, Stanton's name was brought to him before he had finished his meal.

"Show him in here, John," he ordered, impatient to learn the cause of his new confidant's early call.

"Good-morning, Stuyve!" cried Stanton, as he hurried into the breakfast-room, and threw himself into a chair, out of breath. "Half a cup of coffee, please; I need a bracer."

"What's the matter, Percy?" asked Vanderheyden, with forced calmness. "Are you in trouble?"

"No, you are," answered Stanton, curtly. "Nearly through?"

"Yes, we'll go into the library, where we'll be undisturbed," answered Vanderheyden, still controlling his agitation.

"Am I in any more trouble than I was in last night?" he asked, presently, after he and his guest had lighted cigars and the butler had closed the door of the library behind him.

"I don't know, Stuyve. That's what I wanted to ask you. Have you read the *Tribune*?"

Vanderheyden, who had brought the offending journal to the library, thinking to read it after Stanton's departure, shook his head.

"I've been informed," he said, wearily, "that some scandalous penny-a-liner has sent over a lot of stuff from

Petronople that the *Tribune* has thought fit to print." Then he bounded from his chair suddenly, and stood erect. "They haven't had the infernal audacity to mention Winifred's name, have they?"

"No! no! Sit down, Stuyve, and keep cool," cried Stanton, remorsefully. "It's all my fault. I've given you a wrong impression, old man. The *Tribune* is not a yellow journal. And there's nothing in the dispatch from Petronople to rattle you a bit—though there are several things in it that struck me as queer. Here, hand me the paper. I'll read you the article, if you feel up to it. You don't look quite fit, Stuyve."

"I'm all right," returned Vanderheyden, brusquely. "Fire away. It must be pretty stale stuff by this time anyway. I'm inclined to imagine, Percy, that events at Petronople are somewhat kaleidoscopic in their tendency at present. But go ahead. I'm listening."

CHAPTER VII.

LEFT AT THE POST.

What Stanton read aloud to Vanderheyden ran as follows:

"This is, indeed, an era of American expansion. A short time ago our people were looked upon in Europe as peripatetic millionaires, eccentric but harmless. Since the battle of Manila Bay, however, there has been a feeling on the Continent that a Yankee should be handled with care and watched with suspicion. The idea seems to prevail that an American, be it man or woman, may behave very creditably for a time, but is apt to have sudden and irresistible attacks of ambition that may threaten the peace of the world at any moment. A song that has had a great vogue in the American colony in Paris of late illustrates the foregoing. One verse of it runs as follows:

"Let us fill our glasses, comrades! Let us drink to Uncle Sam!

Let us toast a flag that's flying far away!
'Tis the flag that's proudly waving o'er the
Philippines and Guam;

And wherever it is floating it shall stay."

"Then the singers stand erect, and, glasses in hand, chant the following chorus:

"Oh, the flag that's flying gayly o'er the islands of the sun

Is a sentiment to stimulate our mirth;
'Twas a dash o' Yankee humor and a bit o' Yankee fun

When we started out to walk around the earth."

"All of which is not uninteresting, Percy," put in Vanderheyden, impatiently, "but it seems to be an effort upon the part of the tail to wag the dog. Has this loquacious correspondent anything new to say? Is he writing from Petronople?"

"Don't be in such a hurry, Stuyve," protested Stanton, very justly. "This is a Sunday supplement, and the writer had two columns to fill. He'll give you a run for your money presently. Listen:

"It is not at all strange, therefore, that our little capital should be in a state of great excitement over an affair that is a complete mystery to the general public, and is only partially comprehended by the most astute and best-informed diplomatists. It is not too much to say that consternation prevailed in Petronople when it leaked out that the mysterious Madame De Beauville is not a French woman, but an American. It was bad enough, say the Monteravians, to have their king flirting with a Parisian adventuress, but there was nothing either novel or menacing in such a state of affairs. But his infatuation with this fascinating Yankee is a very different matter. Monteravia is near enough to Spain to feel a jealous dread of any American interference in matters of state. *Le Roi s'amuse* is a reassuring phrase much in evidence in Petronopolitan drawing-rooms at present, but it blinds nobody to the real dangers of the situation—dangers that seem to me to be growing more active every day.

"The affair has been made more complicated by the arrival in Petronople of an American who appears to possess sufficient audacity to consider himself a worthy rival of Alexis III. Whether he is really a lover or only a confederate

of Madame De Beauville, close observers of the *dramatis personae* do not feel sure. If this were merely a palace intrigue, with nothing at stake but lost reputations and broken hearts, it would be wholly unworthy of the attention paid to it. But the fact is—and the diplomatic circle is at one in this opinion—that a great war may be precipitated by the queen's jealousy and the rage of the Russian party at the ascendancy that Madame De Beauville has gained over the king."

"Wait a minute, Percy," implored Vanderheyden, in a melancholy voice. "Give me time to catch my breath, will you? Of course, the American who has the audacity to consider himself a worthy rival of the king is Ned Armstrong. But I don't understand it at all, Percy. I had gathered the idea that Talcott's plan was to have Armstrong flirt with the queen, not with—ah—Madame De Beauville. I don't think they've been quite frank with me. I don't seem to be in the running at all, do I?"

"Not a bit of it," answered Stanton, frankly. "You were left at the post, Stuyve, and you didn't know it. I'm glad that you are beginning to see things as they really are."

"Don't hit a man when he's down," implored Vanderheyden, weakly. "But go on, Percy. There's more to it, isn't there?"

"Yes, but the rest of it is mostly guesswork. 'It is hardly necessary to say,' goes on the correspondent, 'that conjecture is rife as to the identity of Madame De Beauville and Alexander Benson, the American who will break a lance with a king for a lady's glove. That the lady's real name is not De Beauville is certain, and that her knightly compatriot was not born a Benson is more than probable. At this writing, however, I am not in a position to say more about this important feature of the case. I think it only fair to assert, however, that, despite the malicious gossip that bids fair to plunge this fair kingdom into chaos, there is nothing in Madame De Beauville's appearance, bearing or conversation to

warrant the widespread belief that she is an unprincipled *intriguante*. From my coign of vantage, this fascinating coquette has more the appearance of a woman of position and wealth in search of a new sensation. She reminds me of a smiling, innocent, mischievous child playing with explosives, and wholly ignorant of the danger in which she has placed herself and others.'

"That the king is madly in love with her, there is not the slightest room for doubt. He made no concealment of his passion before Benson's appearance upon the scene, but since then his royal recklessness has been actually astounding. I have heard the rumor that Benson confided to a friend that he had hoped to throw oil upon troubled waters. It looks now as if he had thrown the oil and then touched a match to it.'

"I realize that it is difficult for the majority of my readers, living as they do in a great democracy, to grasp the unquestionable fact that this "De Beauville affair," as it is called in diplomatic circles, may be the spark destined to explode the European power-mine. A jealous wife, a flirtatious husband, a charming grass widow, and a man from nowhere, form a dramatic quartet to be found at any fashionable pleasure resort in America. Their little four-handed game of cross-purposes is absorbing to the players and amusing to the onlookers, but nobody takes it too seriously. Suppose, however, that upon the outcome of such a commonplace affair should hinge the future welfare of the United States! Suppose that the jealous wife had it in her power to plunge the country into a war involving the great powers of the world! Would not the American people be intensely interested in every scrap of news emanating from the hotel within which this flirtation was taking place? I insist, therefore, that the beautiful little city of Petronople is the most significant spot on earth to-day to the civilized world.'

"I don't like the look of it, Percy," remarked Vanderheyden, dependently. "There's no doubt that Winifred is in danger—this newspaper chap deliberately says that she is. He is also con-

vinced that she is in complete ignorance of the peril in which she stands. Confound Ned Armstrong, anyway! He is evidently doing the bull-in-the-china-shop act. On a mission requiring the nicest tact and delicacy, he seems to have started in by antagonizing everybody in sight, excepting Winifred, the one person he should have avoided."

"But," put in Stanton, argumentatively, "it's just possible that there is a real Alexander Benson, and that Armstrong has actually remained in the background."

"Nonsense," cried Vanderheyden, stubbornly. "Doesn't the newspaper man express the doubt that Benson is this marplot's true name? And it's just like Ned to rush in where angels would fear to tread. I can see them now—my wife and Armstrong—putting their heads together to lead his majesty a merry dance. They couldn't resist the temptation to have fun with the court of Monteravia. Mrs. Vanderheyden, Percy, is doing just what the *Tribune's* correspondent thinks she is. That she has a vein of mischief in her make-up, I know well enough. There had been what she considers plenty of harmless excitement about her flirtation with the king, but the affair had begun to bore her after a time. Then Armstrong appeared, at an opportune moment, and Winifred saw her way clear to a renewal of the sport. She would arouse the king's jealousy, and make use of Ned to keep the merry ball rolling. It is not necessary for me to go to Petronople to understand the whole situation. It's merely a study of character—and I have nothing to learn regarding the leading personages in this tragedy, or farce, whichever it may prove to be."

"All that's very well, as far as it goes, Stuyve," commented Stanton, gravely. "But, as the historic Bill Tweed used to say, what are you going to do about it? As I said before, you were left at the post, but you might even now cut across and join the leaders in the home-stretch."

"I'm more than half inclined to take your advice, Percy. I'll lose my mind, I believe, if I'm forced to remain here

much longer while Winifred and Armstrong and the rest of 'em play ducks and drakes with my future happiness."

Stanton gazed at the speaker, searchingly.

"Pardon my question, old man," he began, falteringly, "but I take it that you are in love with your wife?"

"In love with her!" cried Vanderheyden, springing to his feet and striding up and down the library, excitedly. "She's the only thing in the universe worth having. I tell you, Percy Stanton, I'd give my entire fortune if I could find a way to prove to her how much I love her. I threw away my happiness wantonly. I would make any sacrifice to regain it. I tell you, my dear fellow——"

Vanderheyden's confidences were cut short by a rap at the door.

"Come in," he cried, petulantly, and the butler entered.

"There is a reporter from the *Tribune* here, sir, who insists upon seeing you. I told him you never received newspaper men, but he said that it was a matter of great personal importance to you, and I——"

"That'll do, John," cried Vanderheyden, sinking into a chair and gazing blankly at Stanton. Presently he broke the intense silence by saying, hoarsely:

"Show him in here, John. No, don't go, Percy! I'll need your moral support—for I expect to do some tall lying during the next ten minutes, old man."

CHAPTER VIII.

BRILLIANT LIARS.

"I owe you an apology, Mr. Vanderheyden," began Harry Storrs, the *Tribune's* "star" reporter, a clean-cut, wide-awake Princeton graduate, three years out of college.

"You certainly do," assented Vanderheyden. "But sit down, won't you? Apologizing is wearisome work."

"Thank you," said the reporter, seating himself. "To be frank with you, I thought that you would show me the door, and, lo! you give me a chair! I'm obliged to you. Mr. Vanderheyden."

"Then you know, of course, that I consider your call an intrusion?" asked Vanderheyden, bluntly.

"I understand that. But I believe that I can justify my presence here. I had hoped to have a few words with you in private," said Storrs, pointedly, glancing at Stanton.

"There is no necessity for that, I assure you," Vanderheyden insisted, with emphasis. "Mr. Stanton is my friend, sir, and you are at liberty to speak freely before him."

"To tell you the truth," remarked Storrs, frankly. "I am in a dilemma, Mr. Vanderheyden. Of course, I can't reasonably expect you to look at the mission of a modern newspaper from my standpoint. But I have a duty to my employers to fulfill, and I shall endeavor to perform the task with as little discomfort to you as possible."

"Painless interviewing!" suggested Stanton, wickedly. "Information instantaneously extracted, with or without gas!"

"Daintily put, Percy," commented Vanderheyden. "I'll acknowledge that I feel much the same sensation that comes over me when I throw my head back in a dentist's chair and watch the glitter of a row of steel pincers. But why should you interview me, young man? The public can have no interest in my political opinions, and, as for the best method of getting rid of Anarchy, I'm all at sea. Do you smoke?"

"Thank you, no," answered the reporter. "Have you read this morning's *Tribune*, Mr. Vanderheyden?"

"Partially," replied Vanderheyden, reflecting with momentary amusement that his face had assumed what he would have called its poker-game expression. "Of course, nobody can read a New York Sunday newspaper in its entirety and live. But let's come to the point, Mr.—ah——?"

"Storrs."

"Mr. Storrs. What are you driving at?"

"I can tell you in a very few words, Mr. Vanderheyden," answered the reporter, his cheeks flushed and his jaw fixed stubbornly. "Of course, you know

that a newspaper frequently suppresses items of news sent to it by its correspondents. Now, the *Tribune* to-day publishes a letter from our man at Petronople. It tells of a mysterious Madame De Beauville, who has fascinated the King of Monteravia, and may destroy the peace of Europe."

"How interesting!" cried Stanton, in the voice of a gossip who had come unexpectedly upon a new topic of conversation. "Another Helen of Troy *in posse!*"

"Now, our correspondent," went on Storrs, "has informed us in a private letter that he has identified this Madame De Beauville, but he has advised us not to publish her name until we have verified it."

"All of which is quite amusing," commented Vanderheyden, coldly. "But, really, I don't yet see why you are here. Pardon the inhospitality of the remark, but you have not called, of course, to get my views upon the possibilities of a war in Europe. They would be absolutely worthless, from a newspaper standpoint." The speaker glanced from the reporter's face to Stanton's, and caught the gleam of admiration in the latter's eyes.

"I am here to ask you if Madame De Beauville is really Mrs. Vanderheyden," said Storrs, bluntly, taking a letter from his coat pocket.

"Damn your impudence!" cried Vanderheyden, springing to his feet and glaring at the reporter in a rage that was not altogether assumed.

"Gently, old man," protested Stanton, diplomatically. "Give Mr. Storrs a fair chance, Stuyve. He is not here to insult you, I'm sure."

"No, nor to be insulted," said the reporter, coolly. "There is no occasion for hard feeling, Mr. Vanderheyden. Your word will be sufficient to put an end to the whole affair. With your permission, I will read to you a few extracts from this letter, dated at Petronople ten days ago. When you are in possession of all the facts you will be forced to acknowledge, sir, that the *Tribune* has treated you with the utmost consideration. I am here to place the

whole matter in your hands, Mr. Vanderheyden."

The latter had reseated himself, apparently appeased by the reporter's soothing words and manner. In truth, his gaze, as it rested upon the young journalist's face, was not unsympathetic. Vanderheyden recognized the fact that Storrs was a gentleman, placed in an awkward position, but not personally to blame for it.

"You have piqued my curiosity, young man," said Vanderheyden, in a non-committal way. "Read on."

"Without prejudice, you understand," put in Stanton, judiciously.

"I understand, sir," remarked the reporter, an enigmatical smile upon his face. "Now, this is the pith of our correspondent's letter. He says: 'I am forced to the conclusion, after carefully weighing the foregoing, that Madame De Beauville is Mrs. Stuyvesant Vanderheyden, of New York. I have thrown out no hint of this conviction in my story, but I leave it to your local department to verify my identification and to make such use of it as you may see fit. And, let me say again, I cannot lay too much emphasis upon my repeated assertions that this beautiful and clever woman carries the issue of war or peace in Europe in the hollow of her irresponsible hand. What is merely *pour passer le temps* to her is a matter of vital concern to the civilized world.'"

Storrs slowly refolded the letter and returned it to his pocket. He sat scanning Vanderheyden's immobile face, searchingly. Silence reigned in the room for a time, broken presently by the snapping of a match, as Stanton relighted his cigar.

"It appears," remarked Vanderheyden, presently, "that in the first part of your correspondent's letter he states his reasons for the conclusion that he has reached, namely, the astounding proposition that Mrs. Vanderheyden, my wife, has in some way jeopardized the peace of Europe. Honestly, Mr. Storrs, does not the whole thing strike you as rather nonsensical?"

"I am very young, of course," answered the reporter, a broad smile upon

his face, "and inclined to be credulous. But nobody who has once seen Mrs. Vanderheyden could doubt that her beauty might readily destroy a king's peace, if not the world's."

"Yes, you are very young," growled Vanderheyden. "You'll fall from the exalted position of a useful reporter yet, to the low level of a romantic novelist. But there's no necessity for going further into the matter, I assure you. What this—ah—Madame De Beauville may be doing to endanger the peace of Europe I can only gather vaguely from your scrappy presentment of the case. Later in the day I shall satisfy my curiosity by reading your correspondent's letter in the *Tribune*. But let me say at once—and I take it my word is sufficient to you in this connection—Madame De Beauville is not Mrs. Stuyvesant Vanderheyden."

"No?" gasped Storrs, amazement depicted upon his flushed countenance. "Is not Mrs. Vanderheyden in Europe?"

"No," answered Vanderheyden, curtly. "She has been in California for the last two months."

The reporter was standing erect, glancing from Vanderheyden to Stanton and back again, with eyes alight with incredulity.

"You seem to doubt my word, young man," remarked Vanderheyden, rising slowly and confronting the reporter face to face. "You said that my word would be sufficient for you in this matter. You evidently overestimated your youthful credulity. As, however, I should not care to be forced to bring an action against the *Tribune* for libel, I am willing to show you a letter that reached me from Mrs. Vanderheyden yesterday, mailed at Los Angeles last week. Would you care to see it?"

Precocity is not always a desirable quality. The *Tribune's* "star" reporter had attained success in his calling before he had been thoroughly seasoned by years and experience. At a crisis in the fate of what had promised to be the greatest newspaper "scoop" of the year, the youthful Storrs lost both his nerve and his opportunity.

"I owe you another apology, Mr. Vanderheyden," he said, moving toward the door, in a crestfallen way. "I regret exceedingly that I have given you the impression that I doubted your word. All that I can say in my defense is that our correspondent's reasons for his identification of Madame De Beauville seemed to us to be convincing."

Vanderheyden had followed the reporter, his hand extended.

"I hope that you have not the slightest feeling of ill-will toward me, Mr. Storrs," he said, cordially, grasping the reporter's hand.

"None whatever," cried Storrs, responding quickly to Vanderheyden's warmth. "Upon the contrary, sir, I have to thank you for being so lenient toward a most awkward blunder—a blunder, however, that was made, I must say in justice to myself and others, in Petronople, and not in New York."

Vanderheyden's hand was upon the doorknob, about to facilitate the reporter's exit, when the latter asked, eagerly:

"May I put one more question to you, Mr. Vanderheyden? Is there any New York woman who bears a striking resemblance to Mrs. Vanderheyden?"

From across the room came Stanton's voice in answer:

"There is, Mr. Storrs. There is in this city—or, probably in Petronople, at this moment—a woman who bears a most startling resemblance to Mrs. Stuyvesant Vanderheyden. I could never tell them apart at a distance."

"Her name?" cried Storrs, eagerly. "Do you mind telling me her name?"

"That you will have to discover for yourself, young man," said Stanton, indifferently, relighting his cigar in a way that seemed to preclude all further questioning from his inquisitor. "I haven't seen her for some time—and I never knew her name."

"Percy," began Vanderheyden, presently, the baffled reporter having taken his reluctant departure. "Percy, the art of lying like a gentleman is not a modern invention, is it?"

"Comparatively modern, old man," answered Stanton, reflectively. "It dates

from the first marriage ceremony, I imagine."

"H'm," grunted Vanderheyden. "Well, you're thoroughly qualified for matrimony, my boy. You're a very pretty liar, Percy—and you're a good judge of an opening. But I doubt if our fictions will serve us for more than a temporary respite. The scent is growing too hot. I suggest, Percy, that we go into a committee of the whole, to consider—ah——"

"The state of the union," suggested Stanton.

"Yes—that's it exactly. The state of the union, old man."

CHAPTER IX.

A FORLORN HOPE.

Armstrong's second letter, which came to Vanderheyden's hand early in the following week, was as unsatisfactory as his first, from most points of view. But it is needless to say that its recipient read it eagerly, and at once consulted Stanton regarding its contents. It ran as follows:

"MY DEAR STUYVE: To make Rome howl is to have plenty of fun for your money. I feel like the fifth wheel of a great European crisis, and it is hardly necessary to remark that I am growing dizzy. Things are moving here, but I can't tell you to a certainty just what direction they are taking. Talcott and I fondly hoped that we could keep a grip upon this little tempest in a teapot, but I must confess that we are not in full control of the situation. Several times I have been upon the point of cabling to you to come to us, but suddenly the cards would begin to come our way, and Talcott would advise me to defer my summons to you. But you may be sure, old man, that if you do get the mystic word some day, it will mean that matters are in desperate shape here.

"Of course, you want facts, and I can see the look of disgust upon your face as you read my sweeping generalities and wonder why I don't give you all the details of this complicated affair. The fact is, I am bewildered by the mul-

titude of incidents, all having a bearing upon the general crisis, that I ought to lay before you. But I haven't the time or the nervous energy, to give you at this writing the complete history of one of the most astounding incidents in modern diplomacy. When I tell you that, directly or indirectly, every man, woman and child in Petronople is playing a more or less important part in the drama that is passing before my eyes, I may give you some idea of the difficulty under which I labor in my efforts to keep you in touch with the situation.

"Suppose, for instance, that I tell you the queen had a long talk yesterday with the Russian Minister. The full significance of this fact you could not grasp unless I should give you a thousand other facts bearing upon their confab. Or, if I should say to you that, despite every effort of the most powerful influences to check the king's recklessness, he drove through the streets and parks this afternoon with Madame De Beauville beside him, I could not without a long digression, make you realize that Aleck was thus practically shaking his fist defiantly at all Europe. Even as it is, I hesitate to let the foregoing stand, fearing that you may get a wrong impression, old man, from what I have written. I want you to understand—and I know that you will be inclined to—that Mrs. Vanderheyden is not to blame in this matter, despite the bitter accusations brought against her by the Russian party. I have attempted, in the most delicate and tentative way, to open her eyes to the real state of affairs here, but one can't be brutally frank with a woman. It was after the failure of my last effort to make your wife realize the serious dangers involved in her merry little pastime—as she seems to consider it—that I wrote the word 'come' on a cable blank. But a man always hesitates to play his last card, and I feel that your presence here is a kind of forlorn hope that must not be hurled against the enemy until every other arm of the service has been defeated. (Mixed metaphors, you will see, indicate the deplorable condition of my mind at present.)

"I tell you, Stuyve, I'll never be the same man again. Talcott and I are nervous wrecks. If Russia severs diplomatic intercourse with Monteravia—a most imminent possibility—a continental war is bound to ensue. To prevent such a horrible catastrophe is the one great aim of my life, but what can I do that I have not already attempted? The queen won't flirt with me; Mrs. Vanderheyden laughs at my guarded chidings, and Aleck would clap me into prison for two pins.

"To add to our troubles, there's an infernally clever newspaper chap here who writes for the *New York Tribune*, and seems to be a kind of mind-reader. Talcott and I find it necessary to treat him politely, but we're afraid of him. He has a way of asking indirect, seemingly harmless, questions that we are obliged to answer. Presently he will put eight or ten of our replies together and deduce the very fact that we had been studiously trying to conceal. I'm tempted to tell him the whole story, appeal to his patriotism and altruism—if he has any—and throw the responsibility of war or peace upon his shoulders. For, understand me, old man, I still have hopes of preventing the great catastrophe that threatens us, if we can avoid publicity. Talcott and I have put up a scheme that may result in Madame De Beauville's sudden departure for Paris. We have planned it with the greatest care—I can't go into the details now, but it's a daisy, and I think that it will go through. Mrs. Vanderheyden's photograph and letter—you remember that you gave them to me before I left New York—play an important part in our game. I hesitated a long time before consenting to this heroic measure, but we must make a sacrifice of good taste when the welfare of whole nations is at stake. You might not like the plan if you were here, but I am going to run the risk of your displeasure, in the hope of setting myself right in your eyes when I have an opportunity of telling you the whole story, face to face.

"Do you know, Stuyve, I find myself wondering at times whether I am asleep

or awake. I seem to be having a dream in which palaces, kings, queens, armies, diplomatists, spies, mobs, and other nightmare effects pass before my startled eyes; the while I am vainly endeavoring to make them keep quiet for a moment, that I may recover my senses and get out of bed. But the kaleidoscopic vision never rests. The colored pieces, always the same, are forever making new combinations, and I am forced to watch them, hoping that at some happy moment they may get into a position that shall not change too quickly. I have cut down my tobacco, and drink nothing but light wines, but, despite every precaution, my nerves are playing the very deuce with me. There's more than one constitution in jeopardy here at present. Mine and Monteravia's make two.

"Why don't you write to me? I should like to hear that you approve of what I have done so far in this domestic-diplomatic tangle. By the way, you will be interested to learn that Mrs. Vanderheyden has pumped me dry about your present doings, frame of mind, etc. It is quite evident that she has not forgotten you. In fact, I'm inclined to think that you are often in her mind.

"She has tried repeatedly to discover just why I happened to come to Petro-nople. I'm sure that she wonders how much you have heard of her flirtation with his majesty. But I learned at the outset of what I call my diplomatic career to talk a good deal, but to say nothing. I can see the smile upon your lips as you remark to yourself that my diplomacy has affected my letter-writing. But I'm doing my best, old fellow, to protect your interests and to keep you more or less informed regarding the actual state of affairs in this polychromatic area of high pressure. If you have complaints to make of my methods, hold 'em in check until I see you. Will write again in a few days, and hope that I may have something definite to tell you about what Talcott and I call our 'letter-and-photograph plan.'

"Sincerely yours,

"NED ARMSTRONG."

"The King of France, with forty thousand men, marched up the hill, and then marched down again," quoted Stanton, satirically, after he had perused the foregoing. "What do you think of the situation now, Stuyve?"

"It seems to me, Percy," answered Vanderheyden, slowly and despondently, "to be about two-thirds *statu quo* and one-third pipe-dream. Ned is certainly better fitted for a diplomatic career than I had supposed. He has full command of the art of saying nothing definite in a most entertaining way. But what am I going to do about it? He and Talcott have got me ticketed as their 'forlorn hope.' I'm forlorn enough for the part, but I'm a mighty poor specimen of hope. Confound 'em! I believe they're playing me for a Kansas jay!"

"I'm sorry for you, old man," said Stanton, gently. "But don't get rattled. Your time is coming."

"Yes—and so's my funeral," growled Vanderheyden. "But there's nothing stimulating in a recognition of the fact. Touch that button, will you?"

CHAPTER X.

"COME!"

"As a diplomatist," remarked Percy Stanton, to himself, "I am certainly a howling success. I am lost in New York. The place for me is Petronople. I have the makings in me of a second Talleyrand."

His self-satisfaction found its justification in Stuyvesant Vanderheyden, who was seated at the right of their hostess, Mrs. Warren Perry, apparently pleased at his environment.

"The dinner will while away an evening, Stuyve," Stanton had urged. "It will help to restore your mental equilibrium—temporarily. But, above all, your acceptance of Mrs. Perry's invitation will put an end to several absurd rumors."

"What rumors?" Vanderheyden had asked, crossly.

"Oh, there's a charming variety to the

gossip about you, old man. I have heard of you lately from several places—China, Cuba, Abyssinia, Persia, Brooklyn. I have been told that Mrs. Vanderheyden had abducted you because you were flirting with an actress; that you had run off with Mrs. Vanderheyden because Tom, Dick and Harry had lost their heads over her; that Mrs. Vanderheyden had gone to California, and you in search of the North Pole; that a tall, dark man had destroyed your happiness; that a tall, blonde woman had destroyed Mrs. Vanderheyden's happiness; that you had taken to drink, gone into politics, joined a religious brotherhood, a social settlement, the Single-taxers, the Christian Scientists, Tammany Hall, the——"

"Cut it short, will you, Percy?" Vanderheyden had growled. "Admitting that you have heard all this, I don't see how my presence at Mrs. Warren Perry's dinner is to quiet the wagging tongue of gossip."

"It will prove to the people you really care about, old man, that you are not out of the running, that you haven't bolted the track."

"But, to go there without Winifred, is simply to pour oil upon fire, is it not?" asked Vanderheyden, adroitly.

"Not if you have your nerve with you, Stuyve. A few words at the right time will help to silence the scandal-mongers. Frankly admit to them that you are lonely, that you hope Mrs. Vanderheyden is getting as tired of Europe as you are of bachelorhood. Then breathe a few carefully selected curses at the despotic business affairs that kept you here at the very last moment. It's all easy enough if you have your wits about you."

"But, confound it, Percy," grumbled Vanderheyden, "I'm not a professional actor."

"No, but you do very well as an amateur. Do you imagine that Mrs. Perry's guests will be any sharper than that newspaper reporter? You displayed a spark of genius Sunday morning, Stuyve. It is your duty to keep it burning."

"But I won't go," said Vanderheyden,

stubbornly. "If a cable message comes to me, I want to get it at once."

"You can leave word here to have it sent to the Perrys, can't you? The point is just here, Stuyve, though you don't seem to see it: You are doing Mrs. Vanderheyden a great wrong by avoiding all your old friends. Of course, the crowd gossips about you. You owe it to your wife to silence chattering tongues by putting up a bold front. Can't you grasp the fact that you can be of more service to her here at this moment than you could be in Petronople? I tell you, Stuyve, it is your solemn duty to show up at Mrs. Perry's dinner, and bluff the world to a standstill regarding your affairs."

By repeated variations upon this theme, Stanton had eventually overcome Vanderheyden's inertia, and the latter had come to Mrs. Warren Perry's dinner party, vaguely hoping that he might find an opportunity to clip the tongue of tittle-tattle. After all, Stanton might be right. It is not well to allow the world to indulge in too much lying about the size of the skeleton in one's closet.

"It is such a pleasure to see you again, Mr. Vanderheyden," his hostess was saying to him. "We have really missed you exceedingly."

"It is kind of you to say so, Mrs. Perry. But one atom more or less doesn't count for much—especially an atom too much absorbed in his own affairs to be sociable."

"That's what makes it so difficult for us," remarked Mrs. Perry, vaguely, noting with pleasure that the animation of her guests foretold the success of her dinner party. "American men are so absorbed in business and professional matters that women who entertain are always confronted by the same old problem. You prefer a club to a drawing-room, and a stag party to a cotillion."

"But many of us are fond of balls," suggested Vanderheyden, inwardly ashamed of the flippancy of his pun. His hostess, however, was too absorbed in her grievance against the men of her set to note the double meaning of his remark.

"I have imagined at times," she went on, her voice slightly raised, "that the highest type of social life is practically impossible in a democracy."

Ned Armstrong's sister, Mrs. "Jack" Voorhees, had overheard Mrs. Perry's pessimistic complaint. She turned from Percy Stanton for a moment to offer aid and support to her hostess.

"We do the best we can, of course," said Mrs. "Jack," but we are attempting the impossible. Society must have a center of gravity, like everything else. On the other side there is always a royal family and a court circle around which everything revolves. I sometimes wish—you won't quote me, any of you, will you?—that we had a king at Washington."

"How horribly un-American!" cried Dorothy Hodgman, a *débutante* whom a successful first season had tended to spoil.

"But there's something to be said in favor of our American ways," commented the Rev. Mr. Henderson, a young clergyman much interested in the spiritual welfare of New York's smart set. "I have been reading lately about the social turmoil in Petronople. The details are not essential to my argument—if such it can be called. The point that I make is simply this, that where society is dominated by a royal family the happiness of everybody in society is determined by the existing state of affairs at the palace."

"By the way, Mr. Vanderheyden," began Mrs. Voorhees—then paused for an instant, and went on again—"have you heard from Ned lately? I don't know where he is."

Stanton caught Vanderheyden's wandering glance, and made a sacrifice of veracity for friendship's sake that was actually heroic.

"Ned Armstrong is in Paris, Mrs. Voorhees," said Stanton, quickly. "I heard from him through a mutual friend only a day or two ago."

"You were speaking of the crisis in Petronople, Mr. Henderson," came the deep voice of Warren Perry, a heavy-featured, silent man, whose mission in life seemed to be to provide his brilliant

wife with a colorless background. "It does seem absurd, does it not, that the flirtatious tendencies of a little two-by-four kinklet can actually raise another European war cloud?"

"There'll never be permanent peace in Europe," remarked Vanderheyden, coolly, "until France is destroyed. The trouble in Monteravia has been made, I believe, by a Madame De Beauville. There has been hardly a war in Europe for the past four hundred years that was not brought on, directly or indirectly, by a French woman."

There was silence at the table for a time. Mrs. Perry's guests were mentally overhauling their historical data. Even the waiters had been struck by Vanderheyden's remark.

"By Jove, you're right, Stuyve," cried Stanton, presently. "A history of modern Europe should bear the legend: '*Cherchez la femme!*'" His eyes, as they met Vanderheyden's, seemed to say: "Go on, old man. You'll hole out in another stroke."

"Mrs. Vanderheyden was very anxious to go to Petronople this time over," said Vanderheyden, confidentially to a tableful of listeners. "But I urged her to keep away from Monteravia, when I found, the day before she sailed, that I wouldn't be able to get off. Those buffer states are not safe for tourists."

"Well played, Stuyve!" exclaimed Stanton to himself.

"You have been to Petronople, Mr. Vanderheyden?" asked Mrs. Perry.

"I was there years ago. Put in there with my yacht, and lay in the harbor for a week. It's a charming city—damn it!"

The last words he swallowed before they could pass his lips, but Stanton imagined that somebody had used strong language at a remote distance and under restraint. He had been watching his friend closely.

"Mrs. Vanderheyden will be back soon, Mr. Vanderheyden?" queried Dorothy Hodgman, daringly. To-morrow she would have something worth the telling to the younger set.

"Not as soon as I could wish," answered Vanderheyden, frankly. "She

has a trip to Russia in mind—and I am not tyrannical, you know."

"What slaves to duty you men are!" cried Mrs. Voorhees, satirically. "You do all the work of the world, and we have all the fun."

"That sounds like something that one of the women in Stephen Hatch's new play says," remarked the Rev. Mr. Henderson, who was fond of exhibiting his broad-mindedness in the privacy of the inner circle.

"It's the hero—isn't it, the husband—who makes the remark you have in mind?" asked Dorothy Hodgman. "I remember that he says to his wife: 'My life is full of toil and yours of toys. Would you care to change places with me?'"

"And she says something about marriage being a failure because it doesn't work," put in Stanton, mischievously. "It's an absurd play."

"Percy argues that Hatch has based his play upon an impossible situation," remarked Vanderheyden, glad to feel that Monteravia had been left behind. "And I fully agree with him. It is nonsense to suppose that a man and wife, having grown weary of each other's society, should separate deliberately for a year, with the idea of restoring their former fondness for each other. Wouldn't their very willingness to remain apart for so long a time prove conclusively that their love for each other was dead forever? But the playwright reunites his man and wife happily in the last act. It's all very clever, but not at all convincing."

"Marriage, as Hancock said of the tariff, is a local issue," asserted Warren Perry, who sometimes lost his taciturnity toward the end of a dinner. "A playwright is not dealing with general theories, but with individual men and women."

"But, Mr. Vanderheyden," asked Mrs. Voorhees, to prevent an imminent debate upon the scope and limitations of the drama, "doesn't absence make the heart grow fonder? The first act of the play at the New Century impressed me as very logical."

"It was the last act that Mr. Vander-

heyden criticised—as a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*,” explained Stanton.

“It is a subject that we should not discuss,” said Mrs. Perry, smilingly, as she prepared to give the signal that should leave the men to their liqueurs and cigars. “The unmarried are not equipped for the debate, and we who are married don’t care to be quoted upon such a topic. There’s why Stephen Hatch is successful. He is always giving us plays that nobody ought to talk about. Ah, Mr. Vanderheyden, your cable dispatch has come. I promised you that you should have it as soon as it arrived. We will leave you here to read it over your cigar.”

For an instant Vanderheyden glanced at the little envelope, lying upon a tray held toward him by a waiter, as if the thing might explode at his touch. Then he sprang to his feet, as the women left the room, catching the mocking smile in Dorothy Hodgman’s eyes as she passed him.

“You get a cable message every day, Mr. Vanderheyden? How lovely!” exclaimed the pert *débutante*, whose mischief always had in it too much malice to be wholly pleasing.

Vanderheyden tore open the envelope a moment later. It bore the pregnant legend:

“Come,

“NED.”

He tossed it across the table to Stanton, with an apologetic glance at the others. Then he said to a waiter:

“Brandy, please.”

“No bad news, I hope, Mr. Vanderheyden,” cried Warren Perry, kindly.

“Not at all,” answered Vanderheyden, his cheeks flushed and his eyes alight. “Upon the contrary, sir, I consider it the most satisfactory message that I have ever received.”

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. VANDERHEYDEN’S DIARY.

Petronele, Monteravia, Nov. 2. Alas! that I, a woman suspected of being intellectual and known to be charming, should be forced to kill time by

writing the details of a humdrum life! But what is there now for me to do? Failing to retain his love, I have nothing left to keep but a diary. There are three periods in the life of a woman when a diary becomes the only possible preventive of nervous prostration—when love is still a mystery, when love has broken all its promises, and when love is no longer possible. For the second time in my life I turn to a diary for consolation—for has not love broken every vow that it once made to me? It will be grimly amusing some day to compare these annals of disillusion with the record that I kept at nineteen of my daily deeds and dreams. My old diary lies within reach of my hand at this moment, but I dare not read it now. Perhaps I shall not find the courage to dip into it again until I have reached the third stage in my career as a diarist—when love is no longer possible. I can see myself a white-haired, wrinkled, lonely old woman, wrapping my three diaries into a bundle together, knotting the string around the white paper with trembling hands, and cynically inscribing upon the package the title of a life’s history. What shall I call it? Perhaps a *Trilogy of Disenchantment*, or, better still, *Reveries, Realities, Regrets*. What a glorious career, to live to write three diaries that must be burned before I die! Was it only for this that I was born into this beautiful, disappointing world?

Nov. 3. What an enchanting prospect meets my eyes as I glance through the window at a blue sea and a white town! As I reread yesterday’s morbid reflections I realize that to-day I have recovered from the fatigue of my long journey and the petty annoyances attending our arrival at this fascinating old villa. Am I not still young and in perfect health, and does not Marie say that the ocean voyage has brightened my eyes and improved my complexion? This morning, as I watch the white-caps of the Adriatic or gaze at the pinkish-white splendor of this romantic-looking city, vaguely recalling to my mind some forgotten tale of Theophile Gautier, I feel that there is something in life, but, for the life of me, I can’t say

what it is. Marie tells me that our arrival has caused quite a sensation in Petronople. This is a polyglot corner of the world, and the question is being asked in ten different languages: "Who is Madame De Beauville?" I actually begin to fear that it is impossible in these twentieth century days to maintain an *incognita* anywhere for any great length of time. Where can one find concealment from the prying eyes of the Cook tourist? Even the Sphinx must presently disclose her ancient secret, now that she is united to Cairo by a trolley line.

Talcott? I have an impression, but I can't verify it, that the United States Minister to the Court of Monteravia is one Horatio Talcott, a man quite well known in New York a few years ago. I am not sure that he would recognize me, but I'm not at all anxious to meet him. I came to Petronople for peace. It seemed to me the only civilized spot in Europe where I could hope to remain permanently unidentified. But there is already too much gossip in the air. Marie tells me that our Greek servants speak French and are very talkative, inquisitive creatures. And I learn that Alexis III. is a most hospitable monarch, who feels it incumbent upon royalty to patronize foreigners of position who take up their residence for a time in his capital. Why did I come here under an assumed name? I fear that I made a blunder in attempting to hide behind a pseudonym. Only two kinds of people travel *incognita* in Europe, the crooked and the crowned.

Nov. 8. Five days since I have written a line in this second part of my trilogy. After all, no diary was ever worthy of its name. A man or woman who should be sufficiently conscientious and persevering to inscribe a given number of lines daily would be insufferably dull. The ticking of a clock is not music. But to-night I feel the need of the kind of self-revelation and communion that my diary affords me. Talcott is Talcott—Horatio Talcott. That is the unpleasant discovery that has disturbed the even tenor of my way and led me to neglect my journal. I am not surprised that

the man has won considerable success in diplomacy. If he knows who I am, he manages very cleverly to conceal the fact, the while he retains my interest by piquing my curiosity. His explanation of his call, after I had reluctantly received him, was ingenious, if not ingenious. That republicans sojourning in an autocratic country should encourage one another was a pretty conceit, and provided Talcott with a fairly reasonable excuse for his visit. But it is easier for me to consider myself a French woman than to think of France as a republic. Nevertheless, I'm glad to know that Talcott is Talcott. He's a strong man, brilliant in a way, and his diplomatic career has not wholly destroyed his patriotism. I felt quite sure that if I should be forced to appeal to him in his official capacity, he would be both able and willing to serve me. And whether he stood by me because I am an American, or because I married a Stuyvesant Vanderheyden would make no difference in the end. If Talcott is a bit of a snob, so much the better for me. From his standpoint, my concealed weapons are all loaded. But how morbid I am growing! What do I fear? I have been gazing at the restless sea too long. I must drive out and look at the "hills, rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun." Will they not soothe a soul that the ocean has disturbed?

Nov. 9. "For a woman there is no second love," says Heinrich Heine. "Her nature is too delicate to withstand a second time that most terrible convulsion of the soul." I played Chopin all the evening, and then read Heine for an hour. I am very young, or is it that I'm frantically striving to renew my youth? To-night I shall put away childish things and play Grieg for a while and read Matthew Arnold's poems. I should seek in poetry and music not intoxication, but enlightenment—at my age. The difficulty lies in determining just how old I am. Am I twenty-two or fifty-five? Both, I imagine.

The king has an interesting face. He looks "intense." If I were flippant, I should say that Alexis III. never reigns

but he pours. As we passed his victoria—I took Marie to drive with me—he saluted us with a cordiality that would have shocked a Bostonian. Poor fellow! I should imagine from his appearance that while fate had made him a king, nature had designed him for a poet. Marie tells me that the queen is said to be madly in love with him. It is to be hoped that gossip does her an injustice in this matter. It would be such bad form for her majesty to give way to such a disgracefully plebeian passion. If she has so far forgotten herself as to love her husband, she'll be sorely punished for her lack of pride and self-control. I know whereof I speak—and I'm only a Stuyvesant Vanderheyden, alias De Beauville.

Nov. 10. I am more than ever sorry that I came here under an assumed name. M. De Marmosec, the French minister, called last evening, and I did not care to reject his friendly overtures. Of course he knows that I am not Madame De Beauville, if there is such a person; and I'm inclined to suspect that he noted the New York accent to my French. But they do know how to manufacture gentlemen in France. If De Marmosec believes that I am an adventuress he concealed this conviction with the utmost adroitness. Talcott is a very fair brand of rather agreeable claret. De Marmosec is a heady, sparkling wine, to be taken by a woman in very small quantities. But there's a fascinating bouquet to his talk. He gave me the latest Court gossip, bubbling with epigrams, and I learned more about Monteravia's inner circle in half an hour from De Marmosec than I could glean from Talcott in a year. After I had retired for the night I tossed sleeplessly for a time. Finally I fell into an uneasy slumber, from which I awoke with a start. A new thought had been begotten by unconscious cerebration, and I realized, with a most astonishing clearness, that De Marmosec had studied me closely, perhaps with a view to making use of me in some diplomatic intrigue that seems to be going forward. Or is it that he fears that I may disarrange some plan that he has made? What-

ever his purpose may be, I knew, as I lay there gazing at the moonlight streaming through the windows, that this clever Frenchman had come to me with a question in his mind, and that, somehow or other, he had gone away with an answer to his query. It was all vague enough, and when I come to put it into words, there seems to be more in it than I really believe there is. Language is too coarse a medium for the expression of a midnight impression. But I'm afraid of De Marmosec. Perhaps the best thing that I can do is to forfeit my lease of the villa and escape from Petronople before I become involved in the social and diplomatic intrigues of the Monteravian Court. It is very evident that I cannot remain here and keep out of the swim. But where shall I go? I might disguise myself as a peasant and thus preserve my *incognita* for a while. But I can't eat eggs or cheese, and who would do my hair? No, I must keep a cool head and play the game as best I can. I was sorry to discover indirectly from De Marmosec that the king had asked who I am. It must have required all the Frenchman's diplomacy and tact to give a satisfactory answer to his majesty. I am beginning to feel a little uncertainty myself about my own identity.

Nov. 12. I am not equal to the task before me. I have had a most romantic adventure, but it would require the technical skill of a professional novelist to do justice to all its features. Not that I should care for a novel in which this episode made one of the chapters. It's a curious fact that I have never enjoyed reading about kings in fiction. They don't bore me in history, and what I have seen of them in real life has not been uninteresting, but I have always disliked meeting one of them in the pages of a novel. The average author assumes a literary strut when he introduces a king to his readers. Royalty in fiction, as a critic would say, "is not convincing." What a monarchy needs in these days is not a poet laureate, but a court novelist who shall have the privilege of dining with his majesty now and again. When will the realists leave

the slums for a while to study the palaces? Is not a prince fully as significant as a pauper and equally human? I'm sure that Alexis III. of Monteravia is—but this is poor stuff for a diary. If I'm not careful I'll find myself writing fiction instead of recording facts.

Yesterday the sea and the mountains competed for my society, and the latter prevailed. They have been beckoning to me ever since I came here, and the temptation to go to them had become at last irresistible. Donning a walking costume and deaf to Marie's protest—for she insisted that it is not safe for me to go about alone on the outskirts of the town—I set out for the foothills, catching a glimpse of my maid's pale, worried face at a window of the villa as I turned my back to the sea and made straight for the road that climbs the mountains to the southwest of the city. I felt for the moment like a mischievous girl who has run away from school to indulge in an adventure that may have in it an element of danger. I have no doubt that there are real bandits in the wilds of Monteravia. Certainly the mountains as one approaches them from the city present a threatening, Byronic aspect that suggests all kinds of melodramatic possibilities. But what of it? I asked myself as I trudged onward and upward. I'm weary of books, music and introspection. A real brigand, if he were not too dirty, would make a stunning contrast to Monsieur De Marmosec, who is over-civilized. The men of to-day seem to be divided roughly into three classes—those who dream, those who play, and those who achieve. If Stuyve would only take to highway robbery or organize a trust or go into politics—but I'm determined not to mention him in this diary. I can't refrain from thinking of him once in a while, however. The longer I'm away from him, the more I wonder how much I was to blame for making our married life a failure. Did I not encourage him to devote his life to play? But I can never forgive him—never!—for what he said to me that last evening. To be rid of me for a year—perhaps forever! How brutally frank he was! God for-

give me, I think at times that I hate him. The eternal, silent, awe-inspiring mountains seemed to chide me for the petty egotism of my bitter reverie. I had climbed upward stubbornly for an hour, too much engrossed in my own thoughts to note the increasing grandeur of my environment. But now I stood motionless, catching my breath in the sudden ecstacy that my surroundings vouchsafed to me. Far beneath me, by the shore of the splendid sea, lay Petronople, a white dream-city, shining in the sunlight. Around and above me towered the mountains, cedars and pines relieving their grim outlines and stirring my pulse by their splendid grouping. It may be unfeminine, but the beauty of trees has always appealed to me more insistently than that of flowers, much as I love the latter.

Thinking to gain a more sweeping viewpoint by a short excursion from the beaten track, I had clambered to the top of a rock at some distance to the left of the winding roadway, when I came suddenly upon a painter, who, his back toward me, was seated in front of a small easel, gazing seaward, his palette and brush held motionless, awaiting the renewal of his labors. I might, perhaps, have effected my retreat without attracting the artist's attention had not my sense of the ludicrous irresistibly overcome my regard for propriety. I laughed aloud, and my merriment echoed weirdly back to me from the rocks behind me. I had imagined myself not long since fleeing down the road, pursued by a wild-eyed mountain-outlaw brandishing a scimiter, or some other outlandish weapon, and here I was stalking a poor little harmless artist, who had nearly overturned his easel in astonishment at my laughter, and who now stood confronting me with weapons no more terrifying than a palette and a paint brush. But suddenly my rude and ill-timed hilarity froze upon my lips, and I found myself stammering in French:

"Pardonnez-moi, votre majesté! Je ne—"

"N'importe, madame," cried Alexis, removing his gray Fedora from his anointed head, and bowing low with

more the manner of a painter than a king. "I do not wonder that you laugh at my poor daub. It is the kind of criticism that hurts, perhaps, but it is honest, and that is much. It is very hard for me—you can understand that, madame—to obtain from anybody an unprejudiced opinion of my painting. But you have laughed at it. That is enough. I must do better. I must try harder. I must work, work, work."

"But, your majesty," I cried, after having striven in vain to interrupt him, "you are mistaken. I was not laughing at your picture. I have not seen it. I am sure, however, that it will not stir me to ridicule. Have I your permission, your majesty, to look at it?"

"That, of course, madame," he answered, showing a set of beautiful teeth behind his black beard and mustache. "But I am not his majesty this afternoon. I have abdicated for the day. What would you say—I have struck? That is it. I am out on the strike—for higher wages, is it not, and shorter hours? Meanwhile, madame, I am Monsieur Alexis, the poor painter, at your service. And now, you will deign to look at my little picture? See, it is crude, but I love the color, do I not? And I have got the distance, don't you think?"

"It is simply stunning, your—Monsieur Alexis," I exclaimed, in honest admiration. On broad lines, impressionistic, convincing, his rendering of the distant harbor and a corner of the old city that ran down to the water's edge struck me as a marvelous piece of work for an amateur. I think that my voice and face assured him that my admiration of his picture was genuine, for the expression of his eyes changed, and he looked at me with a kind of pleading gratitude that was almost pathetic. I realized instantly that here was a man, designed by nature to excel in a difficult art, who had been doomed by circumstances to pursue a career that gave him no time for the indulgence of his artistic genius. I had come by chance upon the secret of a king's unhappiness, and it was upon my lips to say to him: "You poor fellow, why

don't you cut it all and get away to Africa or America with your paints and brushes?" But I checked my girlish inclination to condole with this unfortunate prince, and enlarged, in the jargon of the schools, upon the merits of his nearly completed work.

"You really like it, madame?" he cried, reminding me of a delighted boy who has been unexpectedly praised for a feat of whose excellence he was not quite sure. "And you have seen many paintings, of course. In your country, madame, everybody is an art critic. Ah, to live in Paris always! Would not that be joy!"

"But, monsieur, your city is very beautiful," I said, honestly. "The Parisian must travel far to find a scene like this."

"Ah, but yonder is my palace," he commented, smiling sadly. "My palace, did I say? My prison, madam. Am I not king? you ask, perhaps. But where is my power? Is it great enough to give me a studio? What if I should set up my easel in my palace and paint, paint, paint? Am I not the king? But presently they would call me mad—Alexis, the Mad King of Monteravia. Now and then I snatch a few hours from cares of state and steal away to the mountains here, but I'm always in fear of a scandal, always in dread of the sharp eyes of both my friends and foes. And do you know, madame, what I do with every picture that I paint?"

"But, your majesty—monsieur—I am a stranger," I hastened to interpose. "How do you know that I will not betray you?"

Instantly he had me by the hand, and was gazing straight into my eyes. "You are as true and honest as you are beautiful," he whispered in his peculiar French. "If I could dare to ask you to be my good friend, talking to me now and then of art and music and the great poets, perhaps coming here once in a while to laugh, if you will, at my poor pictures that I destroy, alas! when they are finished, there would come, madame, into my life a little happiness, for the like of which my soul is hungry and athirst."

It was cruel of me, perhaps, to leave him standing there, surprise and sorrow in his fine dark eyes, but what could I do? The ludicrous side of the situation appealed to me keenly, but I was somewhat frightened at the man's intensity, and the fear had come to me that at any moment I might be found *en tête-à-tête* with this eccentric monarch, greatly to his annoyance and perhaps to my own undoing. The queen is insanely jealous of him, and I'm beginning to believe that she has cause to be. A king with an artistic temperament! Imagine it. And I thought that a golf-playing husband was impossible!

Marie was overjoyed at my safe return to the villa. I was wicked enough to tell her that I had been chased down the mountain by a bandit, brandishing a scimitar, but I am sorry now that I gave way to my inclination to tease her. She'll never permit me to leave the villa again alone—and I might wish to.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. VANDERHEYDEN'S DIARY—CONTINUED.

Nov. 19. A humdrum life, indeed! When I began this diary I imagined that I should have nothing to set down in it that was at all startling or sensational. I imagined that it would be almost wholly subjective in its interest, that I should resemble as a diarist that ancient philosopher who sat motionless and silent in the desert musing always upon his own nakedness. How the duality of our existence emphasizes itself when we endeavor to keep a record of our daily lives! The interplay of the objective and the subjective, of the conscious and the subconscious, of the realism of the physical and the romance of the psychical become manifest when one endeavors to draw even the barest outline of an individual experience. When I was a girl, I wrote as a girl; and my first diary is almost wholly a record of events, a crude history of externals. This diary must be, perforce, a mingling of the objective and subjective, a statement of fact and a groping

for the fact's inner significance. And my diary as an old woman shall be wholly psychical in its interest, eschewing externals and dealing only with the musings of a soul. My girlhood's journal ends with a dash; this one must close with an exclamation point; my third with an interrogation mark. For that is the history in typographical symbols of a human life, from expectancy, through experience, to an unanswerable question.

It is a relief to me to sit here at midnight, after a whole week's neglect of my diary, and find a momentary vent for my overwrought mind through the point of a fountain pen. I came to Petronople in search of rest. I was weary of the world, weary of the lies with which we strive to deceive our fellows and ourselves. I had thought to find here an environment of comparative peace, to enjoy a kind of semi-religious retreat from which I should emerge less discontented with the past, more hopeful of the future. Am I merely the victim of an error of judgment, of a geographical blunder, so to speak; or is it that, being a woman, I am forever chasing rainbows? Of one thing I am very sure: if I had known as much about Petronople a month ago as I know to-night, I should have gone to Finland or Abyssinia or even remained in New York.

There are many reasons why this city is the last spot upon earth within which the world-weary should seek rest. In the first place—and these facts I have learned since I came here—Petronople is a tiny chessboard upon which the great powers of Europe are playing an intricate game, the outcome of which will be of immense importance to the future of this armed and waiting continent. In his cynical, amusing way, M. De Marmosec has endeavored to overcome my crass ignorance regarding the diplomatic intrigues and rivalries going on around me. But I realize that the enlightenment that I receive from him is only partial, that he is striving all the time to compel me to view the situation from his standpoint, perhaps to offer him assistance in the schemes in which

he seems to be involved. To this end, he pretends to consider me a French woman whose heart is wholly devoted to her country's interest. These, I gather, are bound up with Russia's, and at court the Franco-Russian party rallies around the queen.

It was impossible for me to avoid being presented to their majesties. Without egotism, I may say that I have been received at the Court of Monteravia with almost as much ceremony and consideration as would have been shown to me had I been a visiting princess from one of the reigning houses of Europe. The king and De Margiosec are responsible for this, of course, though Talcott, who seems to be somewhat disturbed by my sudden prominence, has hinted to me, very guardedly, that his majesty and the French Minister are not in reality upon the best of terms. Alexis evidently prefers French art to French diplomacy.

His majesty would amuse me were it not that he terrifies me a bit. I understand that the whole Court is chattering about his undisguised inclination to hold me *en tête-à-tête*, whenever etiquette offers him the slightest chance to corner me. I am obliged to confess that I have not placed as many obstacles in his majesty's path as discretion advised. In the first place, the man interests me for the moment. He possesses what the initiated know as temperament, and his enthusiasm for all that is beautiful in the world is stimulating and attractive.

"All artists are optimists, all kings are pessimists," he said to me last evening in the ballroom, after the queen, who poses as a bit of an invalid, had retired. "You can imagine the peculiar situation in which I find myself."

"You must feel like a tennis-ball, your majesty," I remarked, rather flipantly.

"I have landed in the net, I imagine," he returned, meaningly, his dark eyes striving to retain my gaze.

"That should make you wholly pessimistic, then," I said, and presently, after a long silence, he left my side. Talcott took his place. I am always

glad to talk with Talcott, although I suspect that he does not approve of me. But why should he? If he knows who I am, he must think it strange that I am here under an assumed name. I have a vague impression that he attempted last evening to give me a word of advice or warning. If that was his intention he was either too diplomatic or I was too elusive for him to accomplish his purpose. He began frankly enough, however.

"Do you realize, Madame De Beauville," he asked as he took the seat the king had just vacated, "do you realize that the issue of war or peace in Europe may be at this moment in the keeping of the men and women within the range of our vision?"

"There was a sound of revelry by night, and Belgium's capital had gathered then her beauty and her chivalry," I quoted, lightly. "You do not mean to imply, Monsieur Talcott, that this is a Duchess of Richmond's ball?"

"This is not the eve of Waterloo, of course," he went on, very soberly. "But these good people are dancing over a powder-mine. I sometimes shudder to think of the international tragedy that might result from the success, or perhaps the failure, of some one of the many intrigues, plots and counterplots that are going on around us here in Petronople. The balance of power in Europe may be so easily disturbed!"

"Why can't rulers be contented with what they have? Why are they always weeping for new worlds to conquer?"

Talcott gazed at me thoughtfully for a time. Then he said, rather brusquely for a diplomatist, I thought:

"You should ask that question of his majesty, Madame De Beauville. And, I'll admit to you, that I should like to know his answer."

I had expected to find the queen quite an interesting personage. I have been greatly disappointed in her. She has made an effort, apparently, to treat me with courtesy, but despite her many accomplishments and fine bearing, I always leave her presence with the feeling that she is at heart a good deal of a barbarian.

"You are so original!" the king said to me one day.

"And your queen is so aboriginal," I said to myself, and saw that he wondered at what I was smiling.

He has tried to get me to promise that I will climb to his mountain studio again and criticise his latest painting. He often reminds me of a spoiled child who has never been denied anything that he craved. Not that he is at all crude in his methods of procedure. In fact, he is amazingly clever in presenting his arguments and making his appeals. He has so little real happiness in his life! He loves art, and there is no one in all the world to offer him one word of encouragement! My praise of his picture marked an epoch in his career! He would gladly throw away his kingdom to paint a really great picture, and know that I admired it!

These are a few of the strings upon which he harps. Indirectly he is always accusing me of cruelty, and I sometimes admit to myself that there may be some justice in the charge. But why should I encourage the poor fellow to paint pictures that he must destroy as soon as they are finished? Why should I permit him to enjoy my society when all that can come of it will be gossip that is sure to enrage the queen, anger the king's best friends and make my further sojourn here impossible? Why is it that the woman is always forced to display common sense for two in a case of this kind? A case of this kind, did I say? Was there ever another one just like it? Given a queen with a streak of the savage in her make-up, a king with "an artistic temperament," so-called; and "the other woman," who believes, with Heine, that a woman can love but once—and the situation becomes, so far as I know, unprecedented.

Nov. 26. I knew that the queen would be crude and clumsy in her play when it came to the nicer points of the game. She takes herself seriously, like a peasant. She has made the amazing blunder of affronting me in public. Three days ago I had determined to leave Petronople and go to Paris for the winter, but I have changed my

mind and shall remain here for a while. If the queen had refrained from her open display of jealousy, she would have been rid of me forever. But she made the mistake of losing her temper at a crisis and I find that I also have a touch of the barbarian in my make-up. All that is highly civilized in me urges me to go to Paris at once, but I am too angry to heed the voice of prudence. I know that De Marmosec and Talcott would be overjoyed at my departure, but my retreat under fire would be practically a public confession that I am not willing to make. That is a mixed metaphor, I imagine, but I am too agitated to-night to clarify my style. I hope, however, that by stating the facts as they occurred I may get into a calmer frame of mind. I couldn't sleep now if I went to bed. Poor Marie, how cross I was to her! I must do something nice for her to-morrow.

The inner circle at Court drinks Russian tea and eats caviar sandwiches at five o'clock every afternoon. Sometimes only the queen is present, sometimes only the king, but day before yesterday they were both in evidence and seemingly upon the best of terms with one another. But whenever Alexis is doing very nicely as a king, the artist in him seems to grow restless and, sometimes, reckless. Talcott was beside me as I stood facing their majesties, teacup in hand, for at this hour of the day the strict etiquette of the Court is somewhat relaxed, and tea, as it once did in American history, makes for equality.

"We are getting into a rut of late," the king was saying in French, smiling at the queen, but, I suspected, really addressing me. "We must inaugurate the Christmas festivities with a function of some splendor. What says your majesty to a costume-ball?"

The queen's thin lips became stubbornly set, and two bright spots of scarlet crept into her pale cheeks. But she still maintained her self-control and managed to make rather a clever answer.

"That would be delightful, of course. False colors are good form if worn only for an evening, I suppose."

I felt the hot blood pouring into my face, and I caught Talcott's worried gaze. As I turned I saw the king plucking nervously at his black beard.

"Your majesty will disguise yourself as—a painter?" asked the queen, still wickedly cool. "And you, Madame De Beauville? You will choose some famous beauty from your nation's past? There is the——"

She paused for a moment, and I wondered if she would have the audacity to insult me face to face.

"There is the Du Barry," she added, as my eyes challenged hers.

"Which still leaves for some one else the still more beautiful Marie Antoinette," I remarked, forcing a smile to my white lips. "Marie Antoinette—a queen who lost her head at a crisis," I added, flippantly, making a courtesy, and, attended by Talcott, retiring from the presence of royalty.

"I implore you, Madame De Beauville, to leave Monteravia at once," whispered Talcott, as we made our way through a laughing, chattering throng of courtiers, diplomatists and women of varied nationalities. I turned and eyed my escort coolly.

"I had made my plans to go to Paris immediately, Monsieur Talcott. I have changed my mind, however. I shall stay here indefinitely."

"I am very sorry," he said, and I knew he spoke the truth. "I can be of little service to you, despite my earnest wish to protect you from the consequences of—pardon my frankness, madame—of your folly."

"'Tis a harsh word—folly," I commented coldly, suppressing the feeling of hot anger that his chiding had aroused.

"If you were an American, Madame De Beauville," he said, pointedly, "I should be in a position to offer you the advice and assistance that I am now debarred from extending to you."

"Believe me, Monsieur Talcott," I said, guardedly, "I am truly grateful to you for your kindly inclinations. I never follow advice, however, and just at present I require no assistance."

"You are in sore need of both,

madame," he remarked, brusquely, as he put me into my coupé. "If their majesties give a costume ball, I implore you not to attend it."

"Should I be invited, Monsieur Talcott," I said, stubbornly, as he still held open the door of my carriage, "I should certainly indulge in the pleasure of an acceptance."

"And you would go to it as——" he faltered.

"Completely disguised—as the Du Barry," I answered, as the coupé drove away.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. VANDERHEYDEN'S DIARY—CONTINUED.

Dec. 17. How much has happened to me since the last time that I indulged in the pleasure of making these pages less white and more interesting—a process, alas! that life seems inclined to pursue with all of us! That sounds like cheap cynicism, I suspect, but is it not a fact that not one of us would willingly exchange our pessimistic worldly wisdom for the optimism of our ignorant youth? It may be, as the poet says, that "he who knows the most must mourn the most," but where is the sage so melancholy from his knowledge that he would voluntarily become an ignorantus? I had believed, when I came to Petronople, that I had nothing to learn to complete my mental equipment as a *mondaine*. But nobody is thoroughly prepared to pass an examination upon the ways of the world who has not taken a post-graduate course at a royal court. New York's inner circle furnishes its members with a broad and liberal education, but it is a kindergarten in some ways compared with the court of Monteravia.

I find that the date of my last confession to my diary precedes the costume-ball. It is high time that I should make a record of the events of that historic night, before my memory begins to play me false. Despite the widespread belief that the queen and her party were opposed to the function, the affair was a most stupendous success.

De Marmosec, who is not easily impressed, admitted to me confidentially that at last Alexis III. might justly claim the title of *Le Grand Monarque de Monteravia*.

In the first place, the ballroom of their majesties is at any time a delight to the eye. Byzantine in the splendor and voluptuousness of its equipment, there is nothing in that wing of the palace that brings to mind the twentieth century, unless one learns that the brilliant light that intensifies the rich coloring of the gorgeous frescoes and priceless tapestries is electric in its origin. Place within this majestic room a throng of three hundred men and women garbed in three hundred sharply contrasted costumes, and the result is a dazzling, intoxicating picture that no woman, and few men, could ever forget. Every century, every civilization, and much of barbarism, were represented in that gorgeous, motley throng. Cardinal Richelieu hobnobbed with a Spanish dancer, a Turkish Sultan flirted with a Roman Catholic nun; crusaders, Moors, emperors, bandits, queens, peasant girls, monks, mountebanks, court jesters, knights in armor, friars in black, brown or white, East Indian princes, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, Isabella of Spain, Bourbon kings, Monteravian heroes, Greek gods and goddesses, danced and flirted, gossiped and quarreled, making mad merriment in many varied tongues and dialects.

I was content for a time to stand, with my mask down, in a comparatively secluded corner of the great hall, watching delightedly this human kaleidoscope as it changed its outlines and color combinations every moment, to the music of a Hungarian band, concealed somewhere in one of the galleries. Suddenly a masked Jesuit addressed me in a soft, carefully-modulated voice, evidently disguised, for there were familiar tones in it that I felt that I could identify if he talked to me long enough. His eyes, as they met mine through our masks, tantalized me after the manner of his voice; for they were, so to speak, those of a friend borrowed for the occasion by a stranger. His French in-

dedicated more knowledge of Gyp than of the Jesuit relations.

"Mademoiselle is of a retiring disposition," he whispered. "And that is well, of course. Audacity is dangerous in this charming Court circle, is it not?"

"Audacity is always dangerous, sir. Remember that," I answered, striving vainly to put a name to his voice and eyes. "You mean, I take it, that the wicked flee when no man pursueth."

"On the contrary," he answered, quickly, "I mean that the innocent retreats because all men follow. I was expressing approval, mademoiselle, not censure."

"Upon that basis, then, father, I should receive your blessing if I retired at once from the hall."

"By no means," he answered, with emphasis. "In that case, I should be left here lonely and disconsolate."

"But, father, you go to extremes in your flattery. What is one among so many?"

"What is a ring without its jewel, what is summer without the sun?" he queried, flirtatiously. Then his voice changed its pitch and he added, much to my amazement: "And what is marriage without a wife?"

Again I endeavored to identify his eyes, but though the laughter in them added to their familiarity, I could not place them. They were not the king's, De Marmosec's nor Talcott's. Before I could pursue my investigations further, a masked bandit, picturesque but not quite tall enough for the rôle, interrupted my *tête-à-tête* with the Jesuit.

"I have come to claim my dance—begging the father's pardon," said the bandit, bowing ceremoniously, and I instantly recognized the king's voice.

"I must refuse my pardon," cried the Jesuit, curtly. "Dance with this bandit, if you will, my daughter," he said to me, "but I shall come to confess you later on." With that he disappeared, lost to our sight in the throng hurrying to form squares for the minuet.

"A clever actor," remarked the king to me, as he escorted me to the dance. "Who is he?"

"I don't know," I replied. "I wish I did."

My bandit was not pleased with my answer. It was evident that he suspected me of prevarication. Several times as we walked mincingly through the mazes of the old-fashioned dance, his majesty referred to the Jesuit.

"Will you go to confessional, madame?" he asked, in the tone of a petulant boy, as, the minuet ended, we made our way through the polychromatic crowd.

"I shall not cry '*peccavi*,' at all events," I answered, lightly. "To dance with a bandit is no great sin."

"But to break a king's heart—is not that a crime?" he whispered.

"*Lèse majesté*, is it not?" I returned, lightly. "Am I to lose my head?"

"I fear you never do," mused the king, mournfully. "I go early to-morrow morning to the mountains to paint—for the Court will sleep late, will it not? Hard heart, will you not show some interest in my art?"

At that moment a stalwart cardinal swooped down upon us, and, like a scarlet bird of prey, bore me away with him.

"'Twas the robber robbed, was it not?" I heard the voice of Talcott whispering in my ear. "Did a Jesuit get a word with you?"

"He did, indeed. Who is he? There he is—talking to the queen. That is the queen, is it not?"

"It would take more than a small black mask to disguise her, would it not? You must admit, madame, that she has a regal bearing."

"She looks the queen," I admitted, frankly.

"And is as cruel as the worst of her kind," whispered Talcott, meaningly. "She has chilled the Jesuit. He is coming to us for warmth. Be kind to him. He is your friend."

With these words Talcott left me, and I found myself presently under the Jesuit's escort.

"I am waiting," he said, meaningly.

"For what, father?" I asked.

"For your recognition," he answered, in English.

"Ned Armstrong!" I cried in amazement.

"Hush!" he implored me. "I am known here in Petronople as Alexander Benson. Are you glad to see me?"

"Of course I am, Ned," I answered with emphasis. "But how in the world did you happen to come to this outlandish place?"

"I am just from New York," he answered, simply, and I tried to grasp his meaning.

"And are they—they all well in New York?" I asked, absurdly. We had seated ourselves in a far corner of the hall, somewhat protected from prying eyes by a marble pillar.

"That is rather a sweeping question, Winifred," he commented in a half whisper. "There are so many people in New York, you know. They are not all of them well, of course."

A chill came over me and my heart stood still for a moment.

"You have brought me bad news, Ned," I said, excitedly. "Stuyvesant! Tell me, what has happened! Quick!" I stamped my foot impatiently, conflicting emotions overthrowing my self-poise.

"Stuyvesant is in fairly good health—physically," said Armstrong, slowly, pushing his mask to his forehead and gazing at me intently. "But—"

"But—what?" I asked, a feeling of unreasonable anger at somebody or something sweeping over me at that moment.

"He's not easy in his mind," he answered, pointedly.

"And you have come here to calm his mental disquietude? It was very kind of you, Ned Armstrong. I trust that your mission may prove satisfactory to all concerned."

I had arisen and turned my back to him. Instantly his hand was upon my arm.

"I beg of you not to leave me this way," he cried, imploringly. "I acknowledge, Winifred, that my friendship for Stuyve has placed me in a very awkward position in your eyes. But won't you try to be lenient to me—and to him? I tell you that if I had not

come over here at his request, I believe that he would have gone mad."

"Really?" I queried, cruelly cold. "Why did he not come himself?"

"He would not repudiate his promise to you, Winifred."

"You mean," I said, "that he is willing to endanger his sanity rather than break his word to me?"

"I mean just that, Winifred," he answered, and I realized that he was speaking with absolute honesty. But how perverse a woman can be at a crisis!

"Pardon me for my bluntness, Ned Armstrong," I said, moving toward the passing throng. "I don't wish to be discourteous, but I don't believe a word that you have said to me."

Passing the marble pillar I came face to face with my royal bandit.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," he whispered. "You are not displeased with me?"

"The king can do no wrong," I quoted, defiantly, for the Jesuit was leaning against the pillar and could plainly hear my answer to his majesty.

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. VANDERHEYDEN'S DIARY—CONCLUDED.

Feb. 10. When I realize that I have written nothing here for nearly two months it seems almost absurd to go on with a record that began as a diary, but bids fair to end as an annual. I am in the mood to-night, however, to add a few facts to these meagre memoirs of a crisis in my life, and, I am told, in the fate of Europe. How that absurd assertion has been thrust at me from varied sources and in many forms! De Marmosec has hinted that I am jeopardizing the peace of the world. Talcott and Armstrong have bluntly made this astounding accusation to my face. Even the king, who seems to care little about the future of Monteravia or Europe, so long as he wins a certain campaign, has admitted to me, under my searching cross-examination, that our friendship has so angered the queen

and the Franco-Russian party that the diplomatic equilibrium considered necessary at Petronople to preserve the *status quo* in Europe has been threatened. If I could bring myself to believe this, I should leave Monteravia at once. But I can't persuade myself that my harmless flirtation with this unhappy little kinglet—I've really grown quite fond of him in a Platonic way—can have any significance in the world of diplomacy. But what a tempest in a teapot was caused by my public drive with his majesty! And what desperate efforts my friends seem to be making to terrify me into an inglorious retreat to Paris or Kamtschatka! What a clever trick that was—I suppose Armstrong and Talcott were behind it—that tempted me for a moment to hurry to Paris to confront the schemer who had inclosed in his threatening letter a scrap of my writing and the lower half of one of my photographs! Why have they all failed to realize that I can be coaxed but not driven; that I am stubborn only when people misunderstand me?

Why doesn't Stuyve come to me? If he would break his word to me and defend me in person and not by proxy—ah, well, then the old sweet dream might come back again. If I should learn that Stuyve had left New York for Petronople, I really believe that all my old love for him would return to me. But does he care what happens to me? If he doesn't, why did he send Armstrong to Petronople?

The king frightens me. I believe that there must be a streak of madness in his royal blood. His talk grows wilder all the time. He would lose his kingdom to kiss my lips! He would set all the armies in Europe in motion rather than allow me to leave Monteravia! He hints that I am his prisoner one moment, and the next assures me that I am free to go away whenever I'm inclined to. But if I desert him, he will go to the mountains and fling himself to death from the loftiest peak! He would toss away his crown, as a child flings aside a tiresome toy, if I would but fly with him to some far corner of the earth, where there should be nothing in

his life but love and painting. He would have his stationery stamped with a cupid and palette rampant above a crown prostrate, with the legend "Art for Heart's Sake" underneath. How happy we should be!

But, joking aside, I am really inclined to believe that his majesty has some desperate scheme in mind. Marie has repeated to me gossip that has come to her through the servants, and there is no room for doubt that my affair with the king is causing much talk in the city. Marie says that Alexis III., despite his artistic temperament, has the reputation of a desperate and unprincipled rake, who has been known to use his royal power in a most tyrannical manner when obstacles have been placed in the way of his flirtations—if that's the name for them. I find it so hard to dominate my likes and dislikes by my reason. Logically I should fear and despise Alexis III., of Monteravia. The truth is that I am merely sorry for him. My mind tells me that I should hate Stuyvesant Vanderheyden, but—well, I don't hate him. If he would only break his promise and come to me! Stuyve! Don't you hear me calling you? Stuyve! Stuyve!

What hysterical nonsense I am writing! But no eyes but mine will ever see this diary; it would have no *raison d'être* could I not set down in it the inner secrets of my heart. My heart, indeed! The king says that I have none. I would to God that that was the truth!

Feb. 11. A curious thing has happened. Marie tells me that our villa is being watched. I was growing suspicious of my servants, and a thousand little things, none of them significant in themselves, combine to add to my uneasiness. I am tempted to confide my fears to Ned Armstrong and get him to arrange for my sudden departure from Petronople. But I should be forced to swallow a lot of pride before I could bring myself to ask for his assistance. I cannot forgive him yet for his silly, melodramatic effort to lure me to Paris by scraps of a letter and photograph. There is something in the air, however, that worries me. I am too nervous to

write to-night. I'll send for Marie, and go to bed.

Feb. 12. My fears, still undefined, do not abate. The king came here to-day and made a scene. When I told him that I should leave Monteravia at once, he laughed. He's more of a tyrant than an artist, I imagine. What did his laughter mean? Would he dare to prevent my leaving Petronople? I can't believe it. What is that noise? I——

CHAPTER XV.

VANDERHEYDEN'S ARRIVAL.

It was like a fairy city, as it came up out of the Adriatic against a mountainous background. The overcrowded little steamer, whose passengers by their varied tongues suggested the thought that the vessel puffed its way daily from the Tower of Babel to the capital of Dreamland, had tossed the setting sun astern, and, with a sea of gold in its wake, had headed for a golden harbor. From the steamer's deck Petronople looked like a city devoid of poverty and slums, a city of palaces and villas, built of light-pink and pale-green marble. That man had made this glowing splendor of domes and arches and pillared porticos seemed most unreasonable. It was as if the gods had come down from the towering mountain tops and had vied with each other to render their seaside dwellings worthy of their divinity.

But it was not the marvelous splendor of this "gem of the Adriatic" that impressed Stuyvesant Vanderheyden as he leaned against the rail and watched Petronople change from a distant vision of dream-palaces into a real city of narrow, hilly streets, wandering upward from a forest of miscellaneous shipping. There was nothing in the universe for him at that moment but Winifred. His heart burned hot in his very throat. He could see her face against the grim, dark mountains behind the city, in the sunlit waves through which the steamer plowed, in the pink clouds banked against the eastern sky. At times he

would scan the approaching city with searching gaze, striving to identify the marble villa within which, rumor had said, lay the future of war or peace in Europe. Not that he dwelt at that crisis in his life upon the larger issues revolving around his wife. There was no room in his soul to-night for altruism. His love for Winifred, renewed and intensified by an experiment that had been, from one standpoint, at least, eminently successful, dominated his whole being. All Europe might fight, till the last man fell, could he but fold this woman again to his breast and pour into her ears the burning story of his passion and repentance!

Vanderheyden arranged the collar of his coat around his neck. His hands felt cold as they clasped the rail again. There had come a chill to the evening air that had reached his very heart. What if he had come to Winifred's aid too late? Armstrong was not to send for him until the crisis had reached the acutest stage. And now, after days and nights of hideous suspense, he was to learn the truth, to know, within the hour, the best and the worst of it. How slowly this wretched little tub fretted noisily toward its twilight anchorage! The chattering Greeks, Turks, Montenegrins, Bulgarians and Monteravians crowded around him filled Vanderheyden with a dumb, gnawing rage. Their very picturesqueness was oppressive to him, and their vivacity actually maddening. Why could they not keep quiet for a time and allow him to concentrate his thoughts? What signified their petty interests in Petronople compared with the mighty drama in which he had come across the sea to take a leading part? He would have found a way to silence them, could he but have spoken in a tongue that all of them could have understood.

"Behold yonder city," he imagined himself crying to this polyglot group of dark-hued men and women. "What is it to you? Merely the goal that you seek for work or pleasure, for the little things dear to little people. But you know not what it is. It is a burning spark that may set all the world aflame,

it is the fatal straw upon the camel's back, it is a blind Samson whose madness may overthrow the pillars, ay, the whole temple of European civilization. But that is nothing. The really important fact that I wish to call to your attention, my friends—to the end that you may shut up and leave me in peace—is that Winifred is there, and that she needs my assistance. Winifred is in danger, you idiotic, loquacious bandits, and you and the powers of Europe may go to the devil for aught that I care. Now, keep quiet, will you?"

"What are you muttering about, old man?" asked Percy Stanton, placing a hand upon Vanderheyden's arm. "I don't wonder that you are obliged to talk, however, to hear yourself think in this infernal noise. What a wonderful sight it is! I have never seen a more beautiful harbor!"

"Where's James?" asked Vanderheyden, curtly.

"Looking after the luggage," answered Stanton. "It's lucky for us that he knows this place. Your impatience might get us into trouble, Stuyve. But James is a treasure. He talks a good deal about 'is ludship,' but he understands how to handle these people and his knowledge of Petronople is most minute. Armstrong will meet us, of course?"

"I suppose so," answered Vanderheyden. "If he isn't at the pier, we'll drive to Talcott's at once. It won't do for us to go blundering about before we know what's up. There's only one good hotel in the place, but we mustn't show up there until we've had a look at the inside o' things. Confound these fool steamers! It takes 'em a week to make a dock."

"The inside o' things," impersonated by Ned Armstrong, was shaking their hands cordially an hour later.

"You're a brick, Stanton!" Armstrong had exclaimed, as he hustled the travelers into a carriage, after giving a few orders to James regarding their luggage. "I didn't know that you were in the secret, but you'll be of great use to us; and I wish there were ten of

you, old man—or even a whole regiment!"

As their carriage rolled away from the pier, rattling through ill-paved streets that were unworthy alike of gods or men, Vanderheyden removed the leash from his tugging curiosity.

"Winifred, Ned? Tell me—is she safe?"

The artificial warmth that Armstrong had managed to maintain until that moment was blown to sea by a cold breeze from the mountains.

"I believe that she's safe, Stuyve," he answered, gruffly. "But I don't know where she is."

At the peril of life and limb, for the horses were on the jump and the old-fashioned vehicle swayed wickedly, Vanderheyden sprang to his feet; then, perforce, fell back into his seat.

"What the devil do you mean?" he gasped. "You don't know where she is?"

"Don't get rattled, Stuyve," urged Armstrong, soothingly. "I had hoped to bluff you off until after dinner, but I hadn't the sand to keep you in suspense when you fired that question at me point-blank. She was at her villa at ten o'clock last night. This morning no trace of her was to be found."

Stanton handed Vanderheyden a flask and the latter swallowed a stiff dose of spirits at a gulp. The bitterness of his disappointment had been well-nigh unbearable. He felt cold, unnerved, hopeless, a fool who had wantonly tossed his happiness to the winds, and whose quest for it must be forever vain. Presently he pulled himself together, and raised his voice, almost to a shout:

"Out with it, Ned Armstrong! You have a theory. Where do you think she is?"

"Don't make so much noise, old man," said Armstrong, something like an appeal in his tones. "The less notice we attract the better it'll be for us all. You must realize at the outset, Stuyve, that this is not a healthy environment for strangers at present. A foreigner who raises his voice at night stands a fair chance of getting an attack of dagger on the lungs. Now, this is not the

place to discuss our matters. That villainous-looking driver up there may understand English, for all that I know to the contrary. But I'll tell you a few essential facts, to keep you quiet until we reach our little house. I've rented a small villa within a stone's throw of the American legation. Talcott dines with us to-night, and we'll go over the whole ground together. Madame De Beauville—it is best to call her by that name here, you know—did not leave Petro-nople by either boat or train. That much I have proved conclusively."

"But how do you know that she is not at her own house?" asked Stanton, impatiently, knocking his head against Armstrong's as the carriage bumped over a loose stone.

"Her maid came to Talcott this morning in a panic and said that her mistress could not be found. Madame De Beauville's servants are rascally Greeks, who make a good appearance but are not to be trusted. They either would not, or could not, give the maid any information. The latter believes, however, that her mistress did not leave the house willingly. There were various indications that she had been taken away by force."

"What does Talcott say about it? What is he doing?" asked Vanderheyden, hoarsely.

"He's in a very delicate position," answered Armstrong, gloomily. "You can see that. Madame De Beauville is officially a French woman. From a diplomatic standpoint, Talcott has nothing to do with her disappearance. It is a matter for the French Minister to manage."

"And the French Minister? What'll he do about it?"

"He'll do everything to hush the matter up," explained Armstrong. "It's his business to play Russia's game here, and he's blind and deaf and dumb most of the time."

"Do you mean to say," asked Stanton, in amazement, "that you suspect Russia of having a hand in Mrs. Van—ah. Madame De Beauville's—I mean, this affair?"

"That's only one of three plausible theories," answered Armstrong, cautiously.

"And what are the other two?" cried Vanderheyden, excitedly.

"I'll tell you at dinner," replied Armstrong, his hand upon the door of the carriage. "Here we are at last. You won't find much luxury, fellows, but we can be comfortable enough—and I've got a tiptop chef."

Armstrong's hospitable words grated upon Vanderheyden's nerves at that moment. To talk about the excellence of a *chef* at this crisis was to display a heart of stone. How could anybody think of dining when Winifred might be at that very instant in imminent peril of her life?

"Tell the driver to take me at once to Madame De Beauville's villa," said Vanderheyden to Stanton and Armstrong, who had alighted from the carriage and stood awaiting him beneath the *porte-cochère*.

"Are you mad, Stuyve?" cried Armstrong, in a hoarse whisper, putting his head through the carriage door and gazing at Vanderheyden with eyes alight with indignant protest. "Come into the house at once, or you'll ruin everything. If I'd known that you were going to act like a stubborn idiot, I'd never have sent for you."

"Why did you send for me?" growled Vanderheyden, pointedly, as he reluctantly followed Armstrong into the house, a well-equipped villa of comparatively modern construction.

"I'll tell you the whole story at dinner, old man," said Armstrong, good-naturedly, his hand upon Vanderheyden's shoulder. "Go up to your room and I'll send James to you as soon as he arrives. You'll feel more cheerful when you're dressed, Stuyve."

There came a quizzical smile to Vanderheyden's pale, disturbed face, as he climbed the broad, stone stairway to his room. Here he was, confronted by a tragedy that might make his whole life miserable, and Ned Armstrong assured him that a bath and a clean shirt and a dinner-coat would combine to lighten his heart!

CHAPTER XVI.

COMING TO THE POINT.

Vanderheyden was glad to find that a fire had been lighted in his room. He felt cold, weary, disheartened; and the recurring thought that he himself was responsible, in the last analysis, for his present predicament was not at all stimulating. He seated himself before the snapping logs, idly wondering how it had happened that a bedroom in a Monteravian villa had acquired the luxury of an open blaze. But he was not in the mood to dwell long upon his environment. It was as if he had changed since his arrival in Petronople from a spasmodic exclamation point into a chronic interrogation mark.

Question after question he asked of the dancing flames, but the answers that they vouchsafed to him, in crackle and hiss and splutter, he could not interpret. After a time, all minor problems were forgotten, obliterated from his mind by an insistent, all-embracing query. Had Winifred deliberately deceived her woman and voluntarily disappeared from her accustomed haunts? Had she to whom the homage of the upper world was no novelty been so dazzled by the adoration of a king that she had sacrificed her self-respect upon the altar of vanity?

The strongest poisons do their evil work through the smallest doses. One drop of suspicion oozing through Vanderheyden's troubled thoughts had tainted his whole mental being. But despite the circumstantial evidence that tortured him, despite his realization of the fact that he had been unworthy of his wife's love, and in former years had made no special effort to retain it, despite the suspicion that must arise against a woman who gayly assumes an *incognita* and publicly flirts with a notorious rake, king though he may be, despite a multitude of detestable influences that forced themselves upon him, Vanderheyden realized that in the depth of his soul lay faith in Winifred, faith that might be, perhaps had been, shaken, but could not be destroyed.

"You, of course, do not know what

it is to suffer remorse for an irreproachable life." He could hear the playful tones of her deep, velvety voice as she had thus jested with him upon that fateful night, now so long ago, when he had rushed blindly into a separation that promised to be permanent. There came to him in a flash the revelation of his own imbecility at that critical moment in his existence. What an amazing insult, flimsily disguised in flippant epigrams, he had offered to this woman whose love had been his forever, had he not carelessly thrown it away, like a silly child weary of playing with a priceless gem. How brutally frank he had been to her, telling her, fool that he was, that she bored him, that he should learn to hate her did she not leave him in peace for a time. What could a woman worthy of the name do under such circumstances but take him at his word? He saw now, with a clearer vision, the look of injured pride upon her patrician face, the fleeting gleam of pained astonishment that had come once that evening into her great, eloquent eyes. And he could recall now how her haughty spirit had come to her support, and how she had met his cynicism with an *insouciance* that gave him no inkling of her real feelings at the time. If fate should decree that his eyes should never again gaze upon Winifred's fair face, he was forced to acknowledge to himself that he deserved such a punishment. Could he but have known how great in reality had been his love for her! But this revelation had been denied to him until too late. Too late? Was it still too late?

He sprang to his feet, throwing his half-finished cigarette into the fire, and turned to find James eying him respectfully.

"Your things, if you please, sir, are laid out ready to my 'and, sir. Dinner will be served in 'alf an hour, Mr. Vanderheyden."

Here stood an ally, knowing the field of battle, who must no longer remain in ignorance of the coming engagement. As he dressed for dinner, with his valet's assistance, Vanderheyden gave to the latter a clear, concise statement of the

leading incidents that had combined to send him to Petronople. Mrs. Vanderheyden, in a spirit of mischief, had assumed the name of De Beauville, and had become a prominent personage in the Court circle. The queen's jealousy had been aroused, the Russophiles made angry, and the peace of Europe threatened by the drama enacted at the palace. And now Mrs. Vanderheyden had disappeared, leaving the city by no public exit, and without the knowledge of her household. There was reason to believe that she had been taken from home by force. As he hastily sketched this outline of events, the while James listened in studied silence, Vanderheyden felt keenly the bitter humiliation of his position. It hurt his pride to find that he was forced to suppress several essential details of the story that he might maintain before his man the dignity of the master. But it was as well that his valet, who must know something of both the palace and the city, should be placed in possession of the main facts of the mystery.

"You see, James," said Vanderheyden, his toilet nearing its completion, "you see, I want you to solve several minor problems connected with the main question. Keep your ears and eyes open, and your mouth shut. Don't mention my name to anybody, as you value your life. But get about a bit in the city and drink wine here and there. Hobnob, if possible, with the Greeks who man Mrs. Vanderheyden's entourage. You knew many of the palace attendants when you were here with Lord Stratford, did you not?"

"Yes, sir," answered James. "We 'ad the run o' the place for a time, sir, before 'is ludship wrote that sonnet to the queen. Hif Melikoff, the Russian, is still master of 'orse, there'll be no difficulty habout my renewing the friendships o' former days. Melikoff 'ad a fancy for me, sir, and 'e's a great man at the palace. But maybe 'e's been deposed, so to speak, Mr. Vanderheyden. When it came to a question between 'is majesty and 'er majesty, Melikoff was halways for the queen."

"So am I, James," remarked Vander-

heyden, gruffly. "But we're not in politics just now, you know. Your mission in life at present is to find out what has become of Madame De Beauville. Spend money freely. I'll give you all that you may need. But don't forget for a moment that you will be playing a dangerous game and that the slightest blunder may cost you your life. And be careful about drinking too much. You'll need all your wits, every hour of the day and night, my man."

"Is ludship's service was a good school, sir," remarked James, flicking the last speck of dust from his master's Tuxedo. "Hi'll look about a bit while you're hat dinner, sir."

"Very good, James," said Vanderheyden, as he left the room. "Report to me here at eleven, sharp. You may run against something of importance before that time."

Armstrong, Stanton and Talcott were awaiting Vanderheyden in the drawing-room, a cold, scantily-furnished apartment that they were glad to desert for the cheerful little dining-room, where a table daintily set for four gave promise of good things to come.

"It's like old times, isn't it?" cried Talcott, a tall, heavy-featured, keen-eyed man, in middle life, as the quartet seated themselves to begin their repast in Russian fashion with a liqueur and a caviar sandwich. "You've been here before, I believe, Vanderheyden? Petronople doesn't change much. But it was always picturesque, to say the least of it."

"It's like a painted woman," commented Stanton, realizing that there could be no special significance to the conversation until the waiters had been dismissed, "a painted woman who looks beautiful at a distance, but is wrinkled and toothless to the close observer."

Hungry though he was, and compelled to admit that Armstrong had not over-praised his *chef*, the next hour was a long one to Vanderheyden. There came moments when the inclination to spring from his chair and denounce these cool, self-possessed men of the world as laggards in friendship was almost irresistible. To sit there dining

leisurely and discussing flippantly the insignificant things of life, while a scoundrelly petty king was laughing in his ermine sleeve at——! Well, not at him, Stuyvesant Vanderheyden, of course. Alexis III. had never heard of him. But how could Armstrong, Stanton and Talcott rest there, comparing the markets of Petronople with those of New York, while a man's happiness and the peace of Europe might hang upon the issue of this very hour?

"Thank God, they've gone!" he exclaimed, as he puffed at a long, black cigar and heard the door of the dining-room close behind the butler and his assistant, two diabolical-looking Greeks, who had been, in all probability, expatriated justly. "Now, let's come to the point at once, fellows. What have you got to say, Talcott?"

Thus appealed to, the diplomat smiled gently, and put up a protesting hand:

"In my profession, Vanderheyden, we never come to the point unless forced to. Armstrong's your man."

"Out with it, Ned," cried Vanderheyden, rather harshly. "Why did you cable to me to come?"

"Things were getting worse, Stuyve," said his host, calmly blowing smoke into the air. Suddenly he sprang from his chair, opened the door suddenly, and then reclosed and locked it. Upon resuming his seat, he went on: "Our scheme of luring Madame De Beauville to Paris by means of her photograph and letters miscarried. We have a suspicion that she knew who was responsible for it—for she's amazingly clever, old man. Having, as it seemed to us, played our last card and lost, we sent for you. What we had planned to say to you doesn't matter now, for Madame De Beauville's disappearance changes the whole situation."

"You spoke, Ned, of three theories to account for this mystery," remarked Stanton. "I suppose that no line of action is possible until we find the real cause of Mrs. Van—ah, De Beauville's abduction."

"Our hands will be tied until we learn a good deal more than we know at pres-

ent," explained Armstrong. "Now, Talcott and I have cut down a long list of possible explanations to three, which contain the saving grace of probability. In the first place——"

At that moment there came a gentle rap at the door, and the four men exchanged glances of surprise and annoyance. Vanderheyden, who had begun to feel a stimulating reaction now that the topic nearest to his heart was under discussion, was the first to recover himself.

"With your permission, Ned," he said, as he stepped to the door and unlocked it. He was confronted by his valet.

"Hi 'ave news for you, sir," said James, in a subdued tone that failed to conceal his inward excitement.

"Come in," ordered Vanderheyden, curtly, shutting and relocking the door behind his man. "Speak out now, James. We have no secrets here."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE POWER OF MONEY.

James told his story with considerable skill, after his preface had been sharply cut short by his master. Phlegmatic English servant though he was, he seemed to realize fully that he held the center of the stage for a time, and that his lines were among the most effective of the play. As he glanced from face to face of his four intent listeners, there came to him the same sensation that tickles the soul of an actor who sees that he is making a hit before a first-night audience.

The gist of his tale was this: He had entered a wine shop halfway between the villa and the center of the city, hoping to come upon some former acquaintance whose tongue, inspired by old friendship and old wine, should tell him a new story. To his amazement, he had found Melikoff, the Russian, fallen from his high estate and become a tavern lounge and drunkard. The former master of horse, it seemed, had aroused the antagonism of the king, and had

tumbled down the social ladder with a celerity worthy of a better errand. Whether inebriety had been the cause or the result of Melikoff's downfall, James had not learned, and the question was immaterial. The important fact was that the Russian was disgruntled, well-informed, and inclined to be talkative under the influence of wine.

"Well, go on," cried Vanderheyden, as James paused to catch his breath. "If you can talk faster in a chair, sit down."

But the valet remained standing, and continued his narrative. He had pumped the Russian with an ingenuity worthy of one who had been once connected vicariously with the British foreign office. Melikoff, it appeared, lived, somewhat precariously, upon donations from the queen and the Russian party. When, therefore, he had been approached recently by a somewhat disreputable henchman of the king, offering him a large bribe if he would take charge of a party of horsemen, who were to conduct "a prisoner of state" into the mountains, Melikoff, being drunk enough to maintain his prudence and foresight, had rejected the offer, distrusting its source.

"*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*," murmured Talcott, though the room was too close for the airing of Virgil. The diplomat's was the only face in the room that was not either pale or red with suppressed excitement. Armstrong's cheeks were flushed, and he puffed a cigar nervously.

"Madame De Beauville is the prisoner of state," said the latter, presently. "She has been kidnaped, and taken to——"

"Go on, James," put in Stanton, impulsively. "What more did you learn?"

"Not much, hif you please, sir," answered James, apologetically. "Hi thought has 'ow what Melikoff 'ad said was too himportant, so to speak, to keep you waiting, gentlemen."

"But where have they taken their captive?" asked Talcott, coolly. "There are mountains upon all sides of us. In which direction was Melikoff to ride?"

"Hi tried to find hout, sir," replied James, hanging his head despondently.

"But Melikoff didn't know—or 'e's a lovely liar, sir."

"He's that, all right," exclaimed Stanton, with emphasis. "But there's doubtless a basis of truth in his yarn. What are you going to do about it, Stuyve?"

"What's your advice, Talcott?" asked Vanderheyden, gazing fixedly at the diplomatist.

"Officially, of course, I can do nothing for you," said Talcott, guardedly. "Personally, you shall have my best endeavors. I am risking a good deal—officially—by coming here to-night. But my presence, I hope, proves to you that you are to have my aid and support in so far as I can afford to give them to you. My theory of the matter is this: Madame De Beauville has been abducted by the Russians, who are not yet quite ready to take active measures for the acquisition of Monteravia. They hope to satisfy the queen and bring the king to reason by removing the initial cause of the crisis."

"That's plausible enough from your standpoint," commented Vanderheyden, drumming nervously upon the table. "But was it not a hanger-on of the king who approached Melikoff? Alexis is responsible for what has happened. He has had—ah—Madame De Beauville carried a captive to the mountains—rascally royal brigand that he is—and—and——"

"Keep cool, Stuyve," urged Stanton, gently. "Has the king been seen to-day?"

"He has been rather more in evidence publicly than usual," answered Talcott.

"That's suspicious, isn't it? If we could kidnap his majesty and hold him as hostage——"

"Don't talk nonsense, Percy," exclaimed Armstrong. "After you've been here a day or two, you'll see that this is a very serious matter, and that anybody even remotely connected with it is in more or less danger."

Vanderheyden had been pacing a corner of the room, deep in thought, his mind clear and active. For a fleeting moment there came to him a sharp regret for the waste that he had made of his talents. That he possessed execu-

tive ability, courage and initiative he realized at this critical moment, but his self-satisfaction at the thought was tempered by the knowledge that he had allowed these qualities to run to seed. Presently he stood motionless, his hands behind his back, facing his comrades.

"Melikoff's our man," he said, coolly. "Revenge and money will make sharp spurs to drive him forward. In the end it will mean for us a wild ride, a rescue—and then one chance in ten for escape."

Stanton and Armstrong sprang to their feet and grasped Vanderheyden's hands.

"We're with you, old man," cried one.

"To the death," added the other.

"I'd resign my position to ride with you," remarked Talcott, regretfully. "But that's impossible, of course. However, I can be of service to you here. I'll arrange about the horses. You'll need good ones, that's sure."

"Do you think that Melikoff is still at the wine shop, James?" asked Vanderheyden of his valet, whose phlegmatic face was flushed from wine and excitement.

"Hif 'e isn't, Hi know where to find him, sir," answered James, moving toward the door.

"Good! Bring him here at once, drunk or sober. And as you go out, tell Mr. Armstrong's butler to come in to us. And, remember, James, that every moment counts."

As the shift-eyed Greek entered the dining-room a few moments later, Vanderheyden stepped to the door and locked it. What he was up to, none of his companions seemed to know. There was an expression of annoyance upon Talcott's face, while Stanton and Armstrong gazed at Vanderheyden in surprise. He had been showing to them an unsuspected side of his character, and his resourcefulness and energy had come to them as a revelation.

"Stand there," he said to the butler, whose perfunctory smile was slowly fading from a clean-cut, but not attractive countenance. Vanderheyden had reseated himself at the table, and had

ordered the Greek to face him across the board. There was silence in the room for a time, while Vanderheyden prepared the stage for his little curtain raiser. He placed upon the table at his left hand a pile of gold, and his revolver, which he had carried in his hip pocket since leaving New York, upon his right.

"Now, Pericles or Diogenes, or whatever your name may be, listen attentively to what I have to say," began Vanderheyden in French. "Several of your countrymen have been in the employ of Madame De Beauville, of whose mysterious disappearance you have heard. Now, if you will tell me at once all that you know about this affair, this money shall be yours. If you refuse to make a clean breast of it, I'll put a bullet through you."

"The choice is not hard to make," said the Greek in French, which tongue he spoke with considerable fluency. "If I tell you the truth, I risk my life. If I remain silent you will kill me. It is not a pleasant position for an honest, hard-working man, who has done no evil to any one. But I am not quite ready to die for other people—and I shall be glad to add a little to my poor savings. My countrymen at Madame De Beauville's are in the pay of the king."

"Very good," commented Vanderheyden, tossing a ten-dollar piece across the table. Go on."

"Last night Madame De Beauville's house was entered by masked men and she was carried off to the mountains."

Another ten-dollar piece crossed the table, to be clutched by the smiling informer. As the Greek raised his eyes again, he gazed into the muzzle of a revolver not three feet from his blanched face.

"*Bien!*" said Vanderheyden, calmly. "And now to the main point. There are eight tens left upon this side of the table. One more answer, and they are yours. To what part of the mountains was Madame De Beauville taken?"

"In for a penny, in for a pound," seemed to be the thought behind the Greek's change of expression. He was no longer smiling, and his pallor had increased.

"Southeast of here about thirty miles the king has a hunting-lodge," he said in a hoarse whisper, making several blunders in his French. "I could tell you no more, monsieur—not if you had a thousand tens upon one side of you and a Maxim gun upon the other."

Vanderheyden laughed aloud, not merrily, but like a gambler who has played coolly for high stakes, and must relieve his nerves when he has won his game. At that moment a rap at the door was followed by the sound of the valet's voice.

"Let my man and his companion in," said Vanderheyden to the Greek. "Then remain on guard on the other side of the door. I have more money to reward faithful service, but remember that my gun is still loaded."

"So's Melikoff," muttered Stanton a moment later, as James entered, followed by the Russian.

"'E was close at 'and, sir," explained the valet, closing the door behind the butler. "'E 'ad followed me to the 'ouse, so to speak, sir."

Vanderheyden, erect, commanding, cold, incisive, transfixed the fallen Russian's gaze to his.

"Are you good for a thirty-mile ride to-night, Melikoff?" he asked, curtly, in French.

"*Oui, monsieur,*" answered the tousled ex-master of horse, drawing himself up and saluting the speaker respectfully.

"Do you know how to guide us by the shortest road to the king's hunting-lodge, southeast of here?"

A smile flickered across Melikoff's bearded face.

"Surely, monsieur. It's a bee line to my grave, you understand?"

"That is—you'll risk your life for how much?" asked Vanderheyden, gruffly.

"A thousand francs, monsieur."

"What egotism!" exclaimed Stanton in English.

"The bargain is made, Melikoff," said Vanderheyden in French. "We start at midnight, then—five strong. What are our chances of success, Talcott?"

"That depends upon the king's fore-

sight, old man," answered the diplomat, approaching Vanderheyden and taking his hand. "If his lodge is well guarded you may have a merry fight for it. I have more than half a mind to ride with you—for I believe that I am already compromised, officially."

"Stay here, and keep an eye on the king," said Vanderheyden, gratefully. "You're a good fellow, Talcott, and I thank you for what you've done for me. And it's more than possible that I'll soon need a great favor at your hands. It may be desirable presently to try a bold game of bluff with his majesty. In that case, can I depend upon you, Talcott?"

"Through thick and thin, old man," answered the diplomat, again pressing Vanderheyden's hand.

"The union must and shall be preserved," murmured Stanton, as the party separated to don their riding clothes preparatory for a race that bade fair to end in fighting, and perhaps death. "What do you think of Stuyve?" he whispered to Armstrong, as they mounted the hall stairs together. "I didn't know he had it in him, did you?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE KING'S HUNTING LODGE.

The moon had swung clear of the mountain tops as our little cavalcade flung a silvery sea and a sleeping city behind it, and, with Melikoff in the lead, trotted inland. At the top of the first hill beyond the outskirts of Petronople, Percy Stanton turned in his saddle and shook his fist at a palace to the westward, whose towering beauty was enhanced at that moment by the white splendor of the night.

"Ta-ta, Aleck," he cried, mockingly. "If this means war in Europe, it's your own fault. But I wish we had the stars and stripes with us, Ned."

"Shut up," growled Armstrong, urging his horse forward. "You'll need more than the starry flag to save your neck, Percy, if you get too gay."

"Silence behind there," called Vanderheyden, who was riding close to the Russian, "and keep well up."

Their road, smooth and well-kept at first, wound upward slowly, tending southward in its general trend and permitting them to gallop two abreast for many miles. Melikoff rode alone in front, followed by Vanderheyden and his valet, while Stanton and Armstrong brought up the rear. During the first hour their progress was rapid. The gloom of a forest of beech trees was mitigated by the increasing brilliancy of the moonlight, against which trunks and branches and great boulders cast black, spectral shadows as it swept down the mountainside in a silvery avalanche.

"Why don't you speak to me, Ned?" exclaimed Stanton, as they dashed from the forest into the white light beyond. "I'm lonely."

"What's the matter with you, Percy?" growled Armstrong, glancing at his comrade. "Are you scared?"

"Yes," answered Stanton, frankly, "and so are you. But it's great, isn't it? There's a kind of mediæval dare-deviltry about this kind of thing that's fascinating. And it's up-to-date, too. It's our own little effort at expansion, so to speak."

"Get the cobwebs out of your brain, old man," urged Armstrong, in a subdued voice. "You mustn't attempt to annex this little kingdom, Percy. Your knight-errantry will have to content itself with rescuing a fair lady in distress. Great Scott, isn't that stunning! Did you ever see a finer stage setting for heroic deeds?"

They had reached an altitude at which the wild grandeur of the mountains, softened by the moonlight, broke upon their gaze with startling effect.

"We should have an orchestra with us—to play selectitons from Wagner," remarked Stanton, regretfully. "I wonder if the Valkyrs carried flasks?" he added, reining in his horse for a moment to take a pull at a stimulant that he didn't need.

"Close up, fellows! Close up!" cried Vanderheyden, and again the well-

mounted cavalcade dashed onward and upward toward the rocky passes through which they must walk their horses.

Two hours later the riders came to a full halt at a turn in the road that led from a black cleft in the rocks on to a small plateau upon which a few scattered pine trees towered aloft, surrounding a rambling wooden shed that made no pretensions to architectural beauty. The lodge had been built and enlarged by a race of hardy, royal hunters, to whom the luxury of the reigning dynasty had been unknown. But, as Melikoff whispered to Vanderheyden, the building was more comfortable within than its exterior indicated. Alexis III. had seen to that.

"What's your plan, Stuyve?" asked Stanton, nervously, patting the neck of his panting horse, which had so gallantly sustained the stress of a thirty-mile climb into the hills.

"Tie your horses to yonder trees," ordered Melikoff, in French, before Vanderheyden could answer. "I'll await you here and then ride to the front entrance. Follow me close on foot, and if they open the door to me, rush in with revolvers drawn. But don't shoot unless you are forced to. I'm inclined to think, from the general aspect of the place, that we outnumber them."

"No off-side play!" muttered Stanton, as the quartet, having fastened their horses near the entrance to the pass, followed their mounted guide across the clearing toward the main door of the lodge. "Tackle low!"

"Shut up, Percy," implored Armstrong. "You'll queer the whole business yet. Listen!"

Melikoff had bent forward across the neck of his horse and struck the wooden door a resounding blow with the heavy handle of his riding whip. For a time silence reigned within and without the lodge, broken only by the troubled breathing of the Russian's exhausted mount. Presently Melikoff repeated his summons, adding a shout of "*Hola! Hola!*" to the insistence of his whip. Footsteps within the lodge approached the door, and Vanderheyden, revolver

in hand, cast one quick glance behind him at his followers.

"*Prenez garde!*" whispered the Russian, hoarsely, dismounting suddenly, as the noise of bolts withdrawn echoed from behind the door. "*Après moi—vite!*"

"Good work, Melikoff!" cried Stanton, recklessly. "You're center rush. Four! Seven! Six! Eight!"

They were inside the door on the instant, the five of them, with James a bit of a laggard in the charge. Three men, one of whom carried a lighted candle, fell back, with blanched faces, before the impetuous entrance to the great hallway of an armed quartet, followed by a half-hearted valet, whose revolver as it trembled in his outstretched hand was a deadly menace to friend and foe alike.

"It's a touchdown, all right," cried Stanton gayly. "You can kick the goal now without half trying, Stuyve."

Melikoff, who possessed the cultivated Russian's varied linguistic equipment, had been putting a few questions sternly to the trio of Greeks whose defense of the king's lodge had been so surprisingly weak.

"What is it?" asked Vanderheyden, eagerly, in French, noting the changing expression of Melikoff's face. "Where is Madame De Beauville?"

"Who knows?" queried the Russian, shrugging his shoulders. "These rascals tell me that at midnight the discovery was made that she had escaped from her room. She had made a rope of the sheets of her bed and had lowered herself through a window. It seems that these Greeks had underestimated Madame De Beauville's agility and courage. The rest of the household—to the number of eight—have scattered through the mountains in search of her. These men here thought that we brought news of her. They are panic-stricken, fearing the king's wrath. And well they may! He'll have them all flogged—perhaps shot—if they allow their 'prisoner of state' to escape."

A lighted candle, surrounded by bearded faces, disappeared suddenly from Vanderheyden's sight, and he put

forth a hand in the darkness that had fallen upon him to grasp Armstrong's shoulder.

"Steady, Stuyve," he heard Stanton cry, and presently found a flask of spirits at his lips. His momentary faintness, following a wild ride and a bitter disappointment, passed away quickly, and the flickering candle and the hairy faces confronted him again. He turned to glance at the open door through which swept a sharp, crisp breeze, chill with the breath of dawn and odorous of the forest. There stood Melikoff's exhausted horse, restless from fatigue, silhouetted against the first glimmer of coming daylight. And somewhere beyond wandered Winifred, a fugitive, tracked by remorseless men, spurred to the quest by the imminent dread of death. Instinctively, Vanderheyden turned to the Russian for advice.

"You know these mountains, Melikoff?" he asked, eagerly.

"Every foot of them, monsieur."

"And they are full of peril to a stranger?"

There came a gleam of compassion into the Russian's bluish eyes, as he glanced at his inquisitor, shrewdly guessing at the truth.

"They are, monsieur. But madame would not wander far from the road. She would make her way back to Petronople at once, would she not?"

A bitter smile came to Vanderheyden's white lips. Who was he, that he could say what Madame De Beauville might or might not do?

"But, Melikoff," put in Armstrong, who had remained close beside Vanderheyden, uncertain of the latter's full recovery, "there is but one road from here to the city. We should have met Madame De Beauville coming up, had she set out for Petronople."

"Not necessarily, Ned," argued Vanderheyden, his eyes always upon the Russian's face. "She would have secreted herself behind a rock or tree to avoid a party of unknown horsemen. It was too dark in the forest for her to recognize our faces. Remember, she does not know that I am here. But we are wasting time. Is it necessary to

search the lodge, Melikoff? These Greeks have not lied to you, perchance?"

"Prove it for yourself, Stuyve," suggested Armstrong. "Go to her room. A glance will tell you whether you are being deceived. He's a fool who trusts to his ears in this polyglot corner of the world."

"Keep an eye upon these scoundrels, then," said Vanderheyden, glancing at the Greeks, who had extinguished their candle and drawn close together in a dark corner of the hall. "You and Percy and James should be able to keep them out of mischief until my return. Come, Melikoff! You know the place. Can you guide me to Madame De Beauville's room?"

"*Oui, monsieur*," replied the Russian, striding hurriedly toward the interior of the lodge. "You see, monsieur, I was in the service of his majesty for many years."

But the Russian's remark did not tend to soothe Vanderheyden's distraught soul.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN EMPTY ROOM.

The room lay before him in the dim light of early dawn disordered, dreary, deserted. That it had held a captive was as evident as the fact that its captive had escaped. It was apparent at once to Vanderheyden that Winifred's jailors had depended for success more upon the wildness of the country and the weakness of a woman than upon their own vigilance as guards. The ease with which she had made her exit from the lodge was so clear that it was difficult to realize that the king's hirelings had taken their duties seriously. Knotted sheets, tied to a bedpost and hanging almost to the ground through an open window, indicated her method of escape, but failed to establish the daring of her feat. It was necessary to remember that she had left the lodge in the dead of night to become a fugitive in lonely mountain passes, to realize how great had been her courage. As Van-

derheyden gazed from the window through which Winifred had passed from comparative comfort and safety to wanderings fraught with hardships and attended by constant peril, his heart seemed to jump suffocatingly into his throat. Somewhere down among those black shadows, more menacing in the twilight of dawn than they had seemed beneath the moon, fled a woman the hem of whose garment he had never been worthy to kiss.

He saw it clearly now, the whole miserable failure of his selfish life; saw the splendid happiness that might have been his, lost to him forever through his own amazing blindness to the grandeur of a woman's soul. He turned from the window with a hoarse cry of despair that echoed weirdly through the room and startled Melikoff at his post by the open door.

For a moment Vanderheyden stood motionless, his feverish eyes scanning attentively every corner of the tousled chamber, as if he sought some hidden clue that should aid him in his quest for a paradise that he had so wantonly abandoned, an Eden at whose entrance he had himself placed a flaming sword. For a year? Nay, for an eternity, unless God took pity upon him, a fool!

His restless gaze presently centered itself upon a scrap of cardboard lying at his very feet, dropped there, apparently, by Winifred, in her hurried flight. He bent down and raised it to the light. His throbbing heart melted as he caught his breath, and for the first time in years he felt hot tears upon his cheeks. The outriding sunbeam of the new day had flashed through the window, but it brought no warmth with it. As he gazed at his own face, smiling at him from the cardboard, Vanderheyden's hand trembled, as if from cold. Then the blood rushed through his veins, a new light came into his eyes, and his cheeks flushed. And, in the joy of his discovery, the humorous string of his soul vibrated at a touch. To Melikoff's amazement, this strange foreigner—was he a madman?—stood, black against the window, gazing down at a photograph, and laughing aloud. Be-

cause a wife had carried her husband's face across the sea, the latter had bounded from hell to heaven, had sprung from a defeated pigmy into a victorious giant. Like a flash, the ludicrous absurdity of it had come to Vanderheyden, overwrought as he was, and his nerves had sought relief in an outburst of merriment that had struck the Russian as most uncanny.

"Come, Melikoff," cried Vanderheyden, striding across the room, almost at a run. "They told us the truth, those Greeks. We must be off at once. There's no time to lose. Do you hear me?"

"But, monsieur," protested the Russian, as they hurried toward the outer hall, "our horses are done up, and we all need food."

"Food be damned!" cried Vanderheyden, in English. "I go on foot, and I go hungry. But I go at once, you may be sure."

And go he did, despite the protests of the Russian, the diplomacy of Armstrong, the pleading of Stanton, the audacious eloquence of the disconcerted James. Was not Winifred alone in yonder mountains, hunted by unprincipled men, made desperate by the royal displeasure that awaited the revelation of their carelessness? And they talked to him of breakfast, of rest, of delay! There was a square meal in his brandy-flask, recuperation in action, a spark of hope in his heart—and they must suffice!

"Follow me who will; I'm off," Vanderheyden had cried, breaking away from Armstrong's restraining clasp and bolting through the open door, stampeding Melikoff's startled horse, and leaving behind him a group of agitated men, who gazed silently at each other in dismay.

"We have no choice, fellows," exclaimed Stanton, recovering himself, quickly. "We must follow him."

The sun was peeping above the eastern summits as Vanderheyden dashed from the lodge, hot upon the trail of his lost happiness. Never, in all the long centuries, had the tall pine trees surrounding the royal hunting box gazed

down upon so strange a figure as this stalwart man, in riding costume, hatless, but with whip in hand, rushing across the plateau toward the roadway where it broke through the rocks. Not for an instant did he waver in his course, but, striking the gait at once of the long-distance runner, he sped on down the mountain, between overhanging rocks, through patches of beech-grown forests, now in sunshine, now in shadow, never looking behind him, never slackening his speed, holding his pace with the grim persistence and dogged steadiness of a hound upon the scent.

Far up the road behind him, four men panted upon his trail, marveling at his recklessness. Should Vanderheyden run into the searching party from the lodge, his chance of escape would be slim. The king's hirelings would assume at once that a man straining hot-foot toward Petronople carried to their royal employer the news of their disastrous negligence. His death might give them time in which to save their worthless necks—there lay Vanderheyden's peril, and it was neither remote nor shadowy. Melikoff had made that clear to Armstrong and Stanton by ten words of French and the look upon his face.

Hare and hounds in the mountains of Monteravia! A woman, fleeing for liberty, and more than that, followed by desperate jailors; a man who loved her rushing toward his death; in the ruck, stout hearts bent upon a rescue—ah, what a game it was! The sun sprang up from behind the mountains to gaze down upon the sport and down from the heights came a noisy wind that shouted through the passes and whistled through the trees as if it had been loosed to join the hue and cry.

* * * * *

"Brandy here, quick!" exclaimed Armstrong, bending over Vanderheyden's prostrate form.

"He has only fainted, I think," said Melikoff, his fingers upon the pulse that beat feebly beneath his touch.

"What's that in his other hand?" asked Stanton, kneeling beside the Rus-

sian. "The deuce—it's a woman's glove!"

"God 'elp 'im! 'E isn't dead?" gasped James, exhausted from a hot dash that had ended as suddenly as it had begun.

"We can't stay here, Melikoff," said Armstrong after he had forced a few drops of liquor between Vanderheyden's white lips.

"And we can't go back to the lodge," added Stanton, gloomily.

"There's but one thing to do, mes-sieurs," asserted the Russian, in a tone of command. "We must make a litter of boughs and carry him toward Petronople. He may revive sufficiently to walk, by-and-by. If he has merely fainted from fatigue, his strength will return to him presently. But it looks to me as if he was in for a run of fever. In that case, the sooner we get him to the city the better."

"Poor Stuyve!" exclaimed Stanton, gazing again at the little suede glove that Vanderheyden retained in his clasp. It was evident that the latter had stooped to pick it up from the road, and had toppled over, unconscious, from the effort.

Armstrong had glanced up from Vanderheyden's pallid face to meet Melikoff's eyes.

"You're a damned good fellow, old man," he said, in English, to the latter, but the Russian only shook his head and looked perplexed.

"*Parlez Francais, si'l vous plaît,*" he suggested, politely, but Armstrong did not translate his remark.

CHAPTER XX.

A CONVALESCENT'S WISH.

It was a dreary day, both inside and outside the American legation. Petronople lay helpless beneath the pitiless assaults of a storm that had swept across the Adriatic to attack the city with destructive batteries of wind and rain. The narrow streets were deserted, and from the windows of Talcott's house the little capital of Monteravia resembled a painted woman caught by a cloudburst and deprived of her rouge and curls.

Behind Talcott, who stood gazing out upon a dismal world, sat Vanderheyden, in a reclining-chair, toasting his feet at a fire that blithely strove to relieve the gray gloom of his sick-chamber. A month had passed since his collapse upon a mountain roadway, during the greater part of which he had tossed in the delirium of fever, following strange fantasies through the mysterious realms of realistic shadows. He had made a good fight against his foe, and had won a quick recovery, but he was still weak and listless, and not wholly free from the danger of a relapse. Presently, his voice reached Talcott above the clatter of the storm outside and the snapping of the logs upon the hearth.

"You told her that I had gone into the mountains in search of her, old man?"

The minister from the United States to the Court of Monteravia turned from the window, and, drawing a chair toward the fire, seated himself beside Vanderheyden.

"You'd like to hear it all again, Van?" he queried, smilingly, almost like one who surrenders to a child's insistence upon the repetition of a favorite tale. "I told her that you had ridden to her rescue, and——"

"And then?" asked the invalid, impatiently.

"And then came a smile into her face, but I could not guess its meaning. She left here that very hour for Paris."

"Did the king know that she had appealed to you?"

"Nothing happens in Petronople without his majesty's knowledge," answered Talcott, gazing with friendly eyes at Vanderheyden's white, drawn face. He had grown fond of his patient, as he had come to call him, during the past month. "But Alexis III., with all his faults, is not a fool," he continued, after a short silence. "He realized that he had played his last card—and lost the game. Having discovered that Madame De Beauville is an American, he had not the audacity, reckless as he is, to prevent her departure from Monteravia. I accompanied her to the train—and rang down the curtain upon his maj-

esty's little drama, with, I assure you, Vanderheyden, a feeling of great relief in my heart. Since Madame De Beauville's advent to Petronople, I had not enjoyed a moment of repose. Even now I find it hard to realize that the mischief that might have sprung from the king's infatuation has been avoided. I still dream at night of the horrors of a European war, and in my waking hours I catch myself brooding upon the chance of Madame De Beauville's return."

"She won't come back to Petronople," muttered Vanderheyden, despondently, watching the dancing flames with hopeless eyes. "Did she—did she ask how I looked? If I was well?"

"What I had said of your energy in organizing the pursuit covered all that, old man," answered Talcott, soothingly.

"But she refused to await my return?"

"Not in so many words, Van. You mustn't do her an injustice. Her desire to leave Petronople at once had nothing to do with you. She was afraid of the king—and she had cause to be, had she not? To use language not often employed in my profession, his majesty had acted toward her more like a border ruffian than a Christian king. It was not at all strange that she should long for a safer environment than even this house of mine afforded her. You can understand that, can you not?"

"But she left no message for me? Not even a word?"

"Well, no," answered Talcott, hesitatingly. "She—that is—no—not directly, you know. There wasn't much time, and I——"

"Never mind, old man," said the invalid, gently, a bitter smile lingering upon his thin, drawn lips. "When can I get out of this? What does the doctor say about it?"

"In two weeks—possibly three—you'll be able to travel, Van. Frankly, old man, I'll be awfully sorry to have you go."

"Thanks," cried Vanderheyden, heartily. "You've been mighty good to me, Talcott. I'd always had an idea that a diplomatist gradually became a

kind of cross between a devil and a dancing master. But you really have remained quite human, old man. You and Stanton and Armstrong and that good fellow Melikoff really reconcile a man to his kind. It would be a bully world to live in, Talcott, if there weren't any women in it."

The diplomat gazed at his patient, thoughtfully, for a time.

"That's a strange remark for you to make, Van," he remarked, presently, poking at the fire as a blast of wind and a swish of rain beat angrily against the windows. "Unless I'm mistaken, old fellow, you have only one really earnest wish at heart, but one great longing in your soul."

"Only one," acquiesced Vanderheyden, wearily, leaning back against his pillows, with his eyes half closed. "Excuse my seeming discourtesy and ingratitude, Talcott, but my one insistent desire is to be back in New York in my own library, and before my own fire, where I can——"

"Where you can——" queried Talcott, gently.

"Where I can watch the clock," added Vanderheyden, curtly, an answer that struck Talcott as curiously irrelevant, and begotten of fever and fatigue.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STROKE OF THE HOUR.

It was just a year to a day, since Stuyvesant Vanderheyden had put the question to his wife: "Have you ever tried to discover, Winifred, why you and I bore each other so abominably?" He had dined at home, in lonely state, regretting at intervals during the repast his surrender to what he had called an attack of sentimentality. He would have been happier at a club, and his common sense would have been more in evidence. Was it not absurd for him deliberately to condemn himself to an evening of retrospection and regret when he might have found, temporarily, forgetfulness of the past in the companionship of his intimates, or even at a theatre, if his friends bored him?

"What an amazing fool I am," he was

confessing to himself as he strolled into the library to sip his coffee and smoke a cigar. As he seated himself in his favorite chair, and waited for the butler to bring to him his demi-tasse and a liqueur, a memory of his boyhood flashed through his mind, and he smiled, grimly. He recalled a young farmer that he had surreptitiously watched, years ago, lingering at a trysting-place for a country lass who had played him false. He could see the growing disappointment in the yokel's face, turned toward the sunset, and could hear again his despondent voice, as he had stolen away at last, muttering to himself: "Wal, I swan!"

What an interminable year this had been! It had seemed to Vanderheyden that the last month of it had been made up of at least sixty days and twice as many nights. Not that he had looked forward with any confidence to the termination of his misery. That Winifred would return to him at the appointed hour he had no reason to believe. Since he had left Petronople, months ago, he had had no news of her. He had obtained no trace of her in Paris, nor London, and had returned, reluctantly, to New York, realizing at last that if he was to see her again it would be through her own volition, not his.

The library clock struck the half hour as Vanderheyden lighted his second cigar. In thirty minutes more the bell of fate would ring ten times, and the marital vacation that he had suggested in the blindness of his folly would come to its appointed end!

As he sat there, blowing smoke into the air, and watching the hands of the clock, alternately deploring their slowness and dreading their rapidity, Vanderheyden struggled with a problem that the wisest minds have found unsolvable. Is a man the victim of his destiny, or does he forge his own fate? Does design rule our lives, or chance? In his own case, had not luck been so much against him as to eliminate his personal responsibility for failure? Had he arrived, for example, a few hours sooner at the King of Monteravia's hunting-lodge, would he now be seated alone in

his library, watching with feverish eyes a galloping clock, like a criminal doomed to die at the hour of ten? If weakness had not overtaken him in his mad race down the mountainside toward Petronople, he must have reached the American legation before Winifred's departure. If—

But what was the use of filling the past with "ifs"? Pepper and salt can't disguise the fact that a given piece of meat has been badly roasted. And, as the abuse of condiments to atone for the errors of a cook leads to dyspepsia, so does the overindulgence in "buts" and "ifs" drive a man toward melancholia and madness. After all, the past is dead and buried, but the future lives. Vanderheyden glanced at the clock. The hands thereof formed a right-angle. It was a quarter to ten. He verified the clock's accuracy by his watch, and then sprang from his chair, to pace up and down the room, with nervous strides.

Suddenly he paused before a small desk in a corner of the library devoted to his private papers. Unlocking a drawer, he drew therefrom a woman's suede glove, and returned to his chair. The arc of the angle marked by the hands of the clock was barely visible. At the end of three minutes his year's holiday—ye gods, what a name for it!—would be completed. And, then—Vanderheyden pressed the little glove passionately to his trembling lips. A slight perfume stole upon him, and his heart came thumping into his throat. At that instant the remorseless clock struck the first note of ten. Vanderheyden sprang to his feet, like a man shocked by the knell of doom, and turned to confront—Winifred! There she stood—could he believe his eyes?—in traveling costume, deliberately doffing her gloves, a smile upon her face that both thrilled and puzzled him.

"You seem bored, Stuyve," she remarked, much as if she had parted with him an hour ago. Having removed her gloves and hat, she placed them upon the library table, and, drawing a chair toward his, seated herself, coolly, still smiling up at him.

"Sit down," she said, the mocking note in her voice somewhat less in evidence. "You are not looking well."

Vanderheyden dropped into his chair, overcome by conflicting emotions. This sudden revival of a hope that had well-nigh passed away brought with it something of the physical anguish that the drowning feels as he struggles back to life. He still held in his hand the little glove that he had kissed. At sight of it, Winifred bent forward and snatched it from his grasp.

"Pardon my rudeness, my dear Stuyve, but—" She had been eying the glove attentively. "Where did you find this?" she queried, curtly.

"Somewhere between Petronople and a hunting-lodge inherited from his ancestors by Alexis III., King of Montevavia," answered Vanderheyden, striving to rival Winifred in outward calm. "It is the only relic that I possess of my recent adventure."

The woman's face retained its smiling coolness, but she had clasped her hands together tightly in her lap.

"You broke your parole," she remarked, coldly. "I was to have had Europe all to myself."

Vanderheyden, pale to the lips, rose from his chair and walked to the end of the room and back again. Standing erect before her, he looked down into her averted face, striving to gain her eyes.

"*Peccavi*," he murmured, presently. "I broke my word. And you—"

"And I?" she exclaimed, quickly, glancing up at him, with a gleam of defiance in her eyes.

"And you, Winifred, have it in your power to break my heart," he answered, something like a sob in his voice. An instant later, he was upon his knees before her, pressing hot kisses upon her cold hands. The glove that had meant so much to him but a few moments ago had fallen upon the floor at her feet.

"Can you forgive me, Winifred?" he moaned, wondering when she would withdraw her hands. "I was a fool, a brute, a madman! I have been in hell for a year. I am not worthy to kiss your shoe, but God knows I love you."

Winifred! Winifred! Why are you here? It was cruel of you to come if—if——"

"If I did not love you, Stuyve," she whispered, bending forward and touching his forehead with her lips. Then her voice changed, as she said: "But I'm still uninteresting, my dear. I am not yet a woman with a past."

"But I'm a man with a future!" cried Vanderheyden, joyfully, springing to his feet and gazing down into her flushed, upturned face, with his eyes alight with ecstasy. "Listen, Winifred! My whole life shall be devoted to my effort at atonement. You shall know in time that I love you—not as of old,

but with a new fervor and a clearer insight.

She stood erect, a hand upon his shoulder and her face close to his.

"But I understand all that so well, my dear," she murmured. "When Mr. Talcott told me at the legation that you had come across the sea to find me, I knew the truth."

"And, still, you ran away from me!" he said, chidingly, drawing her closer to him, his arm around her waist.

"But, Stuyve, our vacation was not at an end," she argued, yielding herself to his embrace. "It's over now."

"Yes, thank God—forever!" he cried, as their lips met.



IN A FAR COUNTRY

By Arthur Ketchum

WILL you take me back again,
Hills and woods I knew of old?
Will you take me back again,
With my sorrow and my stain,
Will the old-time love still hold?

Will you make me whole again,
Silent hills and sunny land?
Broken dreams I bring to you,
Who the first young rapture knew,
Will your pity understand?

Will you fold me close again?
For I'm wearying to come;
Just to lay me on your breast,
In your quiet and your rest,
Like a child—come home.

SERAPHINA

By Elizabeth Duer

BRADLEY had not proposed when the steamer's nose was almost against Sandy Hook, and yet the words were hovering on his lips. Time was flying, marked by the thud of the screw and the growing distinctness of objects on the New Jersey shore.

She was altogether desirable, beautiful, placidly feminine, and since the moment of departure from Liverpool, when O'Brien had introduced them, Bradley had never left her side save under compulsion.

"Me widowed cousin, Mrs. Caressa," O'Brien had whispered in Bradley's ear. "Make things agreeable for her if ye can, me boy. Sure she's a queen among women!"

O'Brien was an Irishman, given to hyperbole, but Bradley felt he had stated less than the truth.

Staten Island was close at hand, and still Bradley had not spoken. Mrs. Caressa leaned beside him over the railing on the port side and watched the approach of the little vessel from the quarantine station with the interested calm which marked her habitual deportment. All the other women were in a flurry of excitement. Bradley was in a flurry of pros and cons. Would she think him presumptuous—or at best precipitate? Would she value conventionality above the headlong love that comes to a man once in a lifetime? The repose of her expression gave him confidence.

"Mrs. Caressa," he began, "these five short days have been to me a lifetime of happiness——" but here the serene face of the widow was turned away in response to an insistent voice on her other side.

"She'll not get up for me, ma'am, and us landin' in half an hour, and her in her night clothes."

Mrs. Caressa smiled gently.

"My little daughter Seraphina is a poor sailor. I am afraid her nurse and I have spoiled her a bit, but she is all I have in the world."

There was resignation in the tone, but it made Bradley wildly rebellious. He had not known there was a child. The Caressa was to him an Aphrodite of the waves and sea gulls, with no past that he did not share, and no future apart from his love. This new factor in the situation required a readjustment of ideas.

Seraphina's mother accompanied Seraphina's nurse to enforce the necessary eviction, and Bradley stationed himself at the top of the staircase to watch for her return. No cat ever guarded a rat-hole with greater patience.

It was not until the vessel was docked that Mrs. Caressa emerged. Her arm was round a little girl of six or seven years old—pale and elfish.

Bradley smiled to himself at the thought of anything so fragile defying the portly Irishwoman who struggled after them with dressing bags and cloaks.

"This is my Seraphina," said Mrs. Caressa, with the pride of a Capulet presenting his Juliet.

Bradley lifted the child in his arms and carried her to the carriage. She sank back against her mother's shoulder, too wretched to speak. Bradley kept his hand on the carriage door.

"May I see you to-morrow?" he begged.

Mrs. Caressa shook her head.

"I cannot keep Seraphina in town in July," she said, "so I shall take her immediately to Spray Beach. It's so near town that I can come in to see my lawyer every few days, and the hotel is good."

"Thank you," he answered, as if she were doing him a favor, and removing his arms from the carriage window he motioned the man to drive on.

There was still something to be done for her. He could help her maid pass the luggage; and this he did reverently, turning his eyes away from the neatly packed trays lest he should surprise some secret of her toilet and at the same time thrilling with a sense of intimacy as the delicate perfume of violets breathed her personality and changed the rough surroundings into beauty's bower.

The separation lasted for three days. Possibly Bradley was a trifle more sane. He had taken up his old life, and from the force of habit made engagements of all sorts. He told himself they could be broken should a more important one occur.

On the morning of the fourth day he went to Spray Beach. It was intensely hot, and a swim in the ocean was in his day's programme.

The great hotel, with its red and yellow awnings, stood out against the blue of sky and sea. A gentle breeze stirred the palms in the vast entrance hall, and rippled the water in the basin of the fountain. He might have known that where Mrs. Caressa found sanctuary there would be peace and order.

He sauntered through the hotel to the front piazza facing the sea. It was too early to disturb his divinity—barely eleven o'clock. A band of children were in possession, all under the leadership of a little girl, whose gypsy face seemed strange yet familiar. Bradley adjusted his eyeglass—certainly it was Seraphina, but in glowing health. Her elflocks were trained into soft curls; a bow, perched like a scarlet butterfly on the top of her head, kept her luxuriant mane from falling over her brow; her dress, fresh and crisp, would have become a little princess.

A train of cars was in process of construction; even a wretched bachelor like Bradley could see that at a glance. Every chair on the piazza was in requisition. The noise made by dragging the furniture over the bare boards—the shouting and quarreling—would not have disgraced a real railroad yard. At last all was complete except the locomotive, and Bradley knew by intuition it took a rocking-chair to make that—a rocking-chair of the largest size.

A meek old lady doing crewel-work (yellow roses on a white centerpiece) was occupying the locomotive.

Seraphina approached her.

"Will you please get out of that chair," she said. "We have to have it for our train."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said the old lady, testily, and then repented herself with irritable vacillation. "Here, take it. You make such a noise that I should rather go to my room than stand the confusion."

Seraphina regarded her with haughty indifference as she turned the rocking-chair over on its arms with the assistance of a minion. Bradley noted the modern fashion in chair-locomotives is to use the back as a cowcatcher. However, at this point his interest began to flag; he consulted his watch and decided that he might venture to send up his card to Mrs. Caressa. This occupied a few minutes, and on his return to the piazza, where he preferred to wait, he perceived that he was observed, nay recognized, by Seraphina.

She handed the oil can, with which she was bedribbling the locomotive, to her fireman—it was a siphon of fizzy water—and crossed to where Bradley stood.

"I know you," she said. "You're the man who carried me off the steamer."

She stood on one leg and rubbed the other with the buckle of her slipper.

"Aren't you surprised to see me here?" asked Bradley.

"No," she said, airily. "My Nanna told Marie she knew you'd be coming down here after mother."

"You should learn not to repeat ser-

vants' gossip," said Bradley, with rancor.

"Nanna isn't a servant," she said, reproachfully. "It isn't her fault she is poor and has to work. She is just as much a lady as I am, and the bathing master calls her Miss Cassidy, and so must you. Besides," she added, reflectively, "you have come here after mother, for you ain't before her."

Bradley checked an angry pshaw, and reflected that the best manners are injured by indiscriminate association.

At that instant the bellboy, who had been sent with his card, returned, followed by Mrs. Caressa's maid. She explained with French volubility that her mistress had gone to town, but might be back before lunch, and would certainly be back by three o'clock. In the meanwhile there was the *salon de madame*, and books and papers, and she hoped monsieur would wait, as it always gave madame regret to miss her friends.

The bellboy, who was walking away, was recalled by Seraphina.

"Hello, Jack," she cried, "find my Nanna—mind you call her Miss Cassidy—and tell her I'm going to bathe and I want her right away." Here she turned to Bradley. "You can bathe, too, if you like, and you can have mother's bathhouse."

He accepted the suggestion—not in the matter of the bathhouse—but a dip in the sea would be an agreeable way to kill time. He found the bag containing his bathing clothes had been taken to an upper bedroom, and he was just starting to get them, when Seraphina offered to show him the way. She snatched his key.

"No. 305," she read. "That's the third story. We must take the elevator—I often run it. I will now."

An old gentleman was already seated when they entered. He looked Seraphina's match in determination. That young lady possessed herself of the pad to protect her hand from the elevator rope, and calling out, "Shut the door, Tom," she gave the necessary jerk with perfect assurance.

The old gentleman rose from his seat.

"Take it away from her," he cried. "Do you want us all killed? I'll report you at the desk, sir!" pointing a shaking finger at the boy. "Stop at this landing—either that child leaves the elevator or I do."

Seraphina relinquished the rope with a kind of gentle dignity. She smiled at the old man, and slid back the door for him to pass out.

"Ain't he fussy!" she remarked.

Miss Cassidy accompanied them to the beach, and prepared Seraphina for her bath with a celerity born of long practice. In a red bathing-dress and cap, with bare legs and arms, there was something impish in that young person's appearance.

Some of the piazza brigade were building a sand fort, and Seraphina instantly took command, leaving Bradley to breast the waves alone. Miss Cassidy turned her back upon everything disturbing, and under the shade of her parasol became absorbed in the pages of *The One Cent Embellisher*.

Bradley was resting on the sands, after his first swim, when Seraphina seated herself astride his shoulders, with a steady clutch on his hair.

"Now we'll swim out to the raft," she said. "I swam out on the bathing-master's back yesterday, and I'll swim out on yours to-day. 'Tain't deep and 'tain't far."

It never occurred to Bradley to gainsay her. She simply shocked him beyond remonstrance.

On the raft she sat perched, birdlike, perfectly secure, though it bobbed and rocked under the springs of the divers. Her courage was admirable, her self-possession amazing.

It was not till their return to the pavilion that Bradley realized that the bathhouse he had secured was, indeed, Mrs. Caressa's. Seraphina knew its bones and sinews.

Bradley was struggling with the drying process, when a voice, almost at his ear, said:

"It was mean of you to hang your coat over the knothole; I can't see how far you're dressed."

He did not answer; but, being a mod-

est man, he shivered at the danger so barely escaped. The voice went on:

"I'm talking through the knothole now—if you move your coat you can see me. I'm dressed, all but my shoes and stockings. Mother always gives me money for buns after my bath. Won't you give me ten cents?"

Bradley maintained an absolute silence, but it did not discourage her, and, after a moment, she resumed:

"Never mind about the buns; Nanna says they would spoil my lunch, and I'm to have it with you as soon as we get back to the hotel."

Bradley groaned. Would this go on forever? If he married Mrs. Caressa, must he fall under the dominion of Seraphina for all time, as he had done that day? He recognized much that was fine in her character. She was spirited. Oh, yes! she was spirited—and determined (particularly in having her own way, he added, as he put on his coat), and truthful, almost to a fault; but she seemed a danger signal on his future road, which, till a few hours ago, had seemed so clear. He had never met anything like her before, and his courage faltered at the unknown.

She was waiting for him on the pavilion steps, and resumed the conversation where she had dropped it through the knothole.

"I'll take ten cents for caramels instead of buns," she said, "and I won't eat them before lunch, but I want to give some to Jack. Jack's our bellboy. Oh, yes!" this in answer to some objection on the part of Bradley, "he's black, but he can't help that—besides, it's only his face and hands—the rest of him is just as white as you are. I'm going to tease him to let me see his arms some day."

Bradley stood still, in the middle of the boardwalk, and tried to curb the torrent of reimonstrance that surged to his lips.

"Seraphina," he began, "little ladies do not—" but he might as well have addressed a grasshopper. Her eyes were fixed on an advancing figure whose gold-rimmed spectacles and white hair seemed somewhat familiar.

"There he is!" she exclaimed, twitching Bradley's coat. "That's the old man who scolded me in the elevator. I'm going to shame him."

She arranged the middle finger of each hand over the forefinger, to make a cross, and, her victim having by this time passed, she walked backward, pointing her crossed fingers at him and calling: "'Fraid cat!" at the top of her lungs.

At luncheon, she seated herself opposite to Bradley, and, the light falling full upon her face, he saw much that softened the harshness of his judgment. Her eyes were like her mother's, only flaming with the curiosity of young life; her lips were trembling with the upward curves of merriment; the expression was really noble. He called himself a surly curmudgeon for disliking the child, and tried to put some animation into his manner when he spoke to her.

"Well, Miss Caressa," he said, "and what shall I order for you?"

"Oh! they know what to give me," she said; "I always eat the same thing. First I have radishes and chicken *pâté*, and then watermelon and ice cream."

"When I was little," Bradley suggested, "children ate beefsteak and baked potatoes, and things to keep them strong and well."

A shadow of pity came over her face.

"I suppose they didn't have good things in those days," she commented, sadly.

She wasted no time over her meal. All the pastry of the *pâté* disappeared, and some of the chicken. She ate two or three radishes while the servant was getting her ice cream, and some rich cake while he was changing her plate for watermelon. Bradley was even prepared to see her take coffee, but evidently she did not fancy it, for she left when she had finished her fruit, with the remark that she might go sailing, if Nanna would let her. This acknowledgment of nursery authority was comforting to Bradley; he had supposed there was no intermediary restraint between her and Providence.

A feeling of restfulness took possession of Seraphina's guest coincident

with her departure. He loitered over his lunch, then lit a cigar, and strolled up the beach. The charm of Mrs. Caressa dominated his spirit, as he allowed his mind to dwell on every incident of the voyage. He recalled exactly how she looked as they stood together by the railing of the vessel under the Staten Island shore. She was so calm, so transcendently sweet, so beautiful, so well-bred. He was a thin-skinned idiot to have allowed the irritations of the morning to shake his purpose. He meant to marry Mrs. Caressa, if she would have him, and he must be less than a man if he could not get the better of Seraphina. He had thrown himself on the sands while indulging in these and many other fancies, but now he started to his feet, braced by determined resolution.

He looked at his watch; it was almost three o'clock, the time when his dear lady should return from town. If he wished to be on hand to receive her, there was no time to lose.

Bradley was scrupulously neat in all personal matters. His toilet produced an impression of finish which came from something more than good clothes set off by a good figure; there was an exact nicety that betrayed an over-care. As he passed through the great hall of the hotel, a mirror gave back his reflection in reassuring freshness. He looked cool, smart, distinguished.

Outside, the sun was blazing on the tiled walk that ran from the hotel steps to the little Chinese pagoda that served as a railway station. On each side of the walks were carefully-kept grass-plots, edged with flower-borders of scarlet geranium, and these a doddering old Irishman in overalls was watering with an enormous garden hose. Seraphina stood in close attendance; indeed, her intention to do the watering herself was evident, for her little hands were grasping the nozzle, while her face was upturned in passionate entreaty. The man resisted; Seraphina tugged. Her hands were occupied, but her teeth were free,

and without a moment's hesitation she sank them into the arm of her opponent, inflicting such a nip as made him bound into the air, cursing the sunlight blue. The snakelike body of the hose sank to the ground, while the nozzle, pointed to sweep the path, remained in the grasp of the triumphant Seraphina.

Bradley was passing, wrapt in his lover's thoughts, oblivious of sun and grass and flowers, when the flood struck him. It knocked off his hat, it deluged his shirt front, it ran down his neck, it soaked him to the skin. It was so unexpected, so paralyzing, that for a moment he stood stock-still, in the vortex of the whirl of water, and then, with fury in his eye, he sprang at his tormentor, and wrenched her plaything from her hands. He did not shake her, but the temptation was so overpowering that he picked up his limp hat and ran.

A train was just leaving for town, and above its whistle and the scurry of his own footsteps Seraphina's voice floated after him.

"Ain't you goin' to wait for mother?"

It gave wings to his feet. By a superhuman effort, he swung himself on the last step of the end car of the outgoing express, just as Mrs. Caressa's train pulled in on the other track. He found the rear door locked, but he sat down contentedly on the upper step of the platform, and from that vantage-point watched the arrival of the lady. Her little daughter danced round her in circles of welcome; Jack, the bellboy, relieved her of her packages, and she herself, after pausing to put up a lilac parasol, pursued her leisurely way to the hotel.

Bradley's spasm of rage was giving way to a dull heartache; he made an involuntary gesture of farewell to the graceful figure.

"Ah! well; that is over!" he exclaimed, mopping his soaked collar. "I was never intended for the rôle of family-man, and least of all am I fitted to play stepfather to Seraphina."

THE QUEST JOYOUS

By Frank Lillie Pollock

YOUTH is king in the world aglow
With the light from the land of the Heart's Desire;
With their tears and fears let the weaklings go;
Where are the foolish who sorrow so
In the poignant breath of the winds that blow
From the roads where the riders never tire?

What do we reck of the tales they tell—
The timid folk, with their legends dire—
Of serpents bred in the fairy dell,
Were-wolves black in the forest fell,
Doom in the draught of the rainbow well,
And death at the heart of the Heart's Desire?

Who would not die while the world is green,
And the heart is strong and the blood on fire,
Ere life grows wizen and gray and lean,
Sordid the spirit and dead the dream,
And lost the lure of the golden gleam,
And forgotten the quest of the Heart's Desire?

In the purple range is the dragon's hoard—
Farther far is the Heart's Desire!
Lances gleam at the guarded ford,
Gold at the rainbow's root is poured,
Enchantments break on the virgin sword,
And kingdoms rock when our hands aspire.

Youth is king as we ride away—
O the call of the luring lyre!
Time and plenty to hoard and pay
When the eyes are dull and the hair is gray;
Adventure is king of the world to-day,
And lord of the land of the Heart's Desire.

A DEPARTMENTAL CASE

By Olivier Henry

IN Texas you may travel a thousand miles in a straight line. If your course is a crooked one, it is likely that both the distance and your rate of speed may be vastly increased. Clouds there sail serenely against the wind. The whip-poor-will delivers its disconsolate cry with the notes exactly reversed from those of his Northern brother. Given a drought and a subsequent lively rain, and lo! from a glazed and stony soil will spring in a single night blossomed lilies, miraculously fair. Tom Green County was once the standard of measurement. I have forgotten how many New Jerseys and Rhode Islands it was that could have been stowed away and lost in its chaparral. But the legislative ax has slashed Tom Green into a handful of counties hardly larger than European kingdoms. The legislature convenes at Austin, near the center of the state; and, while the representative from the Rio Grande country is gathering his palm-leaf fan and his linen duster to set out for the capital, the Panhandle solon winds his muffler above his well-buttoned overcoat and kicks the snow from his well greased boots ready for the same journey. All this merely to hint that the big ex-republic of the Southwest forms a sizable star on the flag, and to prepare for the corollary that things sometimes happen there uncut to pattern and unfettered by metes and bounds.

The Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics and History of the State of Texas was an official of no very great or very small importance. The past tense is used, for now he is Commissioner of

Insurance alone. Statistics and history are no longer proper nouns in the government records.

In the year 188— the governor appointed Luke Coonrod Standifer to be head of this department. Standifer was then fifty-five years of age, and a Texan to the core. His father had been one of the state's earliest settlers and pioneers. Standifer himself had served the commonwealth as Indian fighter, soldier, ranger and legislator. Much learning he did not claim, but he had drank pretty deep of the spring of experience.

If other grounds were less abundant, Texas should be well up in the lists of glory as the grateful republic. For both as republic and state, it has busily heaped honors and solid rewards upon its sons who rescued it from the wilderness.

Wherefore and therefore, Luke Coonrod Standifer, son of Ezra Standifer, ex-Terry ranger, simon-pure democrat, and lucky dweller in an unrepresented portion of the politico-geographical map, was appointed Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics and History.

Standifer accepted the honor with some doubt as to the nature of the office he was to fill and his capacity for filling it—but he accepted, and by wire. He immediately set out from the little country town where he maintained (and was scarcely maintained by) a somnolent and unfruitful office of surveying and map-drawing. Before departing, he had looked up under the I's, S's and H's in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" what information and preparation to-

ward his official duties that those weighty volumes afforded.

A few weeks of incumbency diminished the new commissioner's awe of the great and important office he had been called upon to conduct. An increasing familiarity with its workings soon restored him to his accustomed placid course of life. In his office was an old, spectacled clerk—a consecrated, informed, able machine, who held his desk regardless of changes of administrative heads. Old Kauffman instructed his new chief gradually in the knowledge of the department without seeming to do so, and kept the wheels revolving without the slip of a cog.

Indeed, the Department of Insurance, Statistics and History carried no great heft of the burden of state. Its main work was the regulating of the business done in the state by foreign insurance companies, and the letter of the law was its guide. As for statistics—well, you wrote letters to county officers, and scissored other people's reports, and each year you got out a report of your own about the corn crop and the cotton crop and pecans and pigs and black and white population, and a great many columns of figures headed "bushels" and "acres" and "square miles," etc.—and there you were. History? The branch was purely a receptive one. Old ladies interested in the science bothered you some with long reports of proceedings of their historical societies. Some twenty or thirty people would write you each year that they had secured Sam Houston's pocket knife or Santa Aña's whisky-flask or Davy Crockett's rifle—all absolutely authenticated—and demanded legislative appropriation to purchase. Most of the work in the history branch went into pigeon-holes.

One sizzling August afternoon the commissioner reclined in his office chair, with his feet upon the long, official table covered with green billiard cloth. The commissioner was smoking a cigar, and dreamily regarding the quivering landscape framed by the window that looked upon the treeless capitol grounds. Perhaps he was thinking of the rough and ready life he had led, of the old days of

breathless adventure and movement, of the comrades who now trod other paths or had ceased to tread any, of the changes civilization and peace had brought, and, maybe, complacently, of the snug and comfortable camp pitched for him under the dome of the capitol of the state that had not forgotten his services.

The business of the department was lax. Insurance was easy. Statistics were not in demand. History was dead. Old Kauffman, the efficient and perpetual clerk, had requested an infrequent half-holiday, incited to the unusual dissipation by the joy of having successfully twisted the tail of a Connecticut insurance company that was trying to do business contrary to the edicts of the great Lone Star State.

The office was very still. A few subdued noises trickled in through the open door from the other departments—a dull, tinkling crash from the treasurer's office adjoining, as a clerk tossed a bag of silver to the floor of the vault—the vague, intermittent clatter of a dilatory typewriter—a dull tapping from the state geologist's quarters as if some woodpecker had flown in to bore for his prey in the cool of the massive building—and then a faint rustle and the light shuffling of the well-worn shoes along the hall, the sounds ceasing at the door toward which the commissioner's lethargic back was presented. Following this, the sound of a gentle voice speaking words unintelligible to the commissioner's somewhat dormant comprehension, but giving evidence of bewilderment and hesitation.

The voice was feminine; the commissioner was of the race of cavaliers who make salaam before the trail of a skirt without considering the quality of its cloth.

There stood in the door a faded woman, one of the numerous sisterhood of the unhappy. She was dressed all in black—poverty's perpetual mourning for lost joys. Her face had the contours of twenty and the lines of forty. She may have lived that intervening score of years in a twelvemonth. There was about her yet an aurum of indig-

nant, unappeased, protesting youth that shone faintly through the premature veil of unearned decline.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said the commissioner, gaining his feet to the accompaniment of a great creaking and sliding of his chair.

"Are you the governor, sir?" asked the vision of melancholy.

The commissioner hesitated at the end of his best bow, with his hand in the bosom of his double-breasted "frock." Truth at last conquered.

"Well, no, ma'am. I am not the governor. I have the honor to be Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics and History. Is there anything, ma'am, I can do fer you? Won't you have a chair, ma'am?"

The lady subsided into the chair handed her, probably from purely physical reasons. She wielded a cheap fan—last token of gentility to be abandoned. Her clothing seemed to indicate a reduction almost to extreme poverty. She looked at the man who was not the governor, and saw kindness and simplicity and a rugged, unadorned courtliness emanating from a countenance tanned and toughened by forty years of out of doors. Also, she saw that his eyes were clear and strong and blue. Just so they had been when he used them to skim the horizon for raiding Kiowas and Sioux. His mouth was as set and firm as it had been on that day when he bearded the old lion Sam Houston himself, and defied him during that season when secession was the theme. Now, in bearing and dress, Luke Coonrod Standifer endeavored to do credit to the important arts and sciences of Insurance, Statistics and History. He had abandoned the careless dress of his country home. Now, his broad-brimmed black slouch hat, and his long-tailed "frock" made him not the least imposing of the official family, even if his office was reckoned to stand at the tail of the list.

"You wanted to see the governor, ma'am?" asked the commissioner, with the deferential manner he always used toward the fair sex.

"I hardly know," said the lady, hesi-

tatingly. "I suppose so." And then, suddenly drawn by the sympathetic look of the other, she poured forth the story of her need.

It was a story so common that the public has come to look at its monotony instead of its pity. The old tale of an unhappy married life—made so by a brutal, conscienceless husband, a robber, a spendthrift, a moral coward, and a bully, who failed to provide even the means of the barest existence. Yes, he had come down in the scale so low as to strike her. It happened only the day before—there was the bruise on one temple—she had offended his highness by asking for a little money to live on. And yet she must needs, woman-like, append a plea for her tyrant—he was drinking; he had rarely abused her thus when sober.

"I thought," mourned this pale sister of sorrow, "that maybe the state might be willing to give me some relief. I've heard of such things being done for the families of old settlers. I've heard tell that the state used to give land to the men who fought for it against Mexico, and settled up the country, and helped drive out the Indians. My father did all of that, and he never received anything. He never would take it. I thought the governor would be the one to see, and that's why I came. If father was entitled to anything, they might let it come to me."

"It's possible, ma'am," said Standifer, "that such might be the case. But most all the old veterans and settlers got their land certificates issued, and located long ago. Still, we can look that up in the land office, and be sure. Your father's name, now, was——"

"Amos Colvin, sir."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Standifer, rising and unbuttoning his tight coat, excitedly. "Are you Amos Colvin's daughter? Why, ma'am, Amos Colvin and me were thicker than two hoss thieves for more than ten years! We fought Kiowas, drove cattle and ranged side by side nearly all over Texas. I remember seeing you once before, now. You were a kid, about seven, a-riding a little yellow pony up and

down. Amos and me stopped at your home for a little grub when we were trailing that band of Mexican cattle thieves down through Karnes and Bee. Great tarantulas! and you're Amos Colvin's little girl! Did you ever hear your father mention Luke Standifer—just kind of casually—as if he'd met me once or twice?"

A little pale smile flitted across the lady's white face.

"It seems to me," she said, "that I don't remember hearing him talk about much else. Every day there was some story he had to tell about what he and you had done. Mighty near the last thing I heard him tell was about the time when the Indians wounded him, and you crawled out to him through the grass, with a canteen of water, while they——"

"Yes, yes—well—oh, that wasn't anything," said Standifer, "hemming" loudly and buttoning his coat again, briskly. "And now, ma'am, who was the infernal skunk—I beg your pardon, ma'am—who was the gentleman you married?"

"Benton Sharp."

The commissioner plumped down again into his chair, with a groan. This gentle, sad little woman, in the rusty black gown, the daughter of his oldest friend, the wife of Benton Sharp! Benton Sharp, one of the most noted "bad" men in that part of the state—a man who had been a cattle thief, an outlaw, a desperado, and was now a gambler, a swaggering bully, who plied his trade in the larger frontier towns, relying upon his record and the quickness of his gun play to maintain his supremacy. Seldom did any one take the risk of going "up against" Benton Sharp. Even the law officers were content to let him make his own terms of peace. Sharp was a ready and an accurate shot, and as lucky as a brand-new penny at coming clear from his scrapes. Standifer wondered how this pillaging eagle ever came to be mated with Amos Colvin's little dove, and expressed his wonder.

Mrs. Sharp sighed.

"You see, Mr. Standifer, we didn't

know anything about him, and he can be very pleasant and kind when he wants to. We lived down in the little town of Goliad. Benton came riding down that way, and stopped there a while. I reckon I was some better looking then than I am now. He was good to me for a whole year after we were married. He insured his life for me for five thousand dollars. But for the last six months he has done everything but kill me. I often wish he had done that, too. He got out of money for a while, and abused me shamefully for not having anything he could spend. Then father died, and left me the little home in Goliad. My husband made me sell that, and turned me out into the world. I've barely been able to live, for I'm not strong enough to work. Lately, I heard he was making money in San Antonio, so I went there, and found him, and asked for a little help. This," touching the livid bruise on her temple, "is what he gave me. So I came on to Austin to see the governor. I once heard father say that there was some land, or a pension, coming to him from the state that he never would ask for."

Luke Standifer rose to his feet, and pushed his chair back. He looked rather perplexedly around the big office, with its handsome furniture.

"It's a long trail to follow," he said, slowly, "trying to get back dues from the government. There's red tape and lawyers and rulings and evidence and courts to keep you waiting. I'm not certain," continued the commissioner, with a profoundly meditative frown, "whether this department that I'm the boss of has any jurisdiction or not. It's only Insurance, Statistics and History, ma'am, and it don't sound as if it could cover the case. But sometimes a saddle blanket can be made to stretch. You keep your seat, just for a few minutes, ma'am, till I step into the next room and see about it."

The state treasurer was seated within his massive, complicated railings, reading a newspaper. Business for the day was about over. The clerks lolled at their desks, awaiting the closing hour. The Commissioner of Insurance, Sta-

tistics and History entered, and leaned in at the window.

The treasurer, a little, brisk, old man, with snow-white mustache and beard, jumped up youthfully and came forward to greet Standifer. They were friends of old.

"Uncle Frank," said the commissioner, using the familiar name by which the historic treasurer was addressed by every Texan, "how much money have you got on hand?"

The treasurer named the sum of the last balance down to the odd cents—something more than a million dollars.

The commissioner whistled lowly, and his eyes grew hopefully bright.

"You know, or else you've heard of, Amos Colvin, Uncle Frank?"

"Knew him well," said the treasurer, promptly. "A good man. A valuable citizen. One of the first settlers in the Southwest."

"His daughter," said Standifer, "is sitting in my office. She's penniless. She's married to Benton Sharp, a coyote and a murderer. He's reduced her to want, and broken her heart. Her father helped build up this state, and it's the state's turn to help his child. A couple of thousand dollars will buy back her home and let her live in peace. The State of Texas can't afford to refuse it. Give me the money, Uncle Frank, and I'll give it to her right away. We'll fix up the red-tape business afterward."

The treasurer looked a little bewildered.

"Why, Standifer," he said, "you know I can't pay a cent out of the treasury without a warrant from the comptroller. I can't disburse a dollar without a voucher to show for it."

The commissioner betrayed a slight impatience.

"I'll give you a voucher," he declared. "What's this job they've given me for? Am I just a knot on a mesquite stump? Can't my office stand for it? Charge it up to Insurance and the other two sideshows. Don't Statistics show that Amos Colvin came to this state when it was in the hands of Greasers and rattlesnakes and Comanches, and fought day and night to make a white man's

country of it? Don't they show that Amos Colvin's daughter is brought to ruin by a villain who's trying to pull down what you and I and all old Texans shed our blood to build up? Don't History show that the Lone Star State never yet failed to grant relief to the suffering and oppressed children of the men who made her the grandest commonwealth in the Union? If Statistics and History don't bear out the claim of Amos Colvin's child I'll ask the next legislature to abolish my office. Come, now, Uncle Frank, let her have the money. I'll sign the papers officially if you say so; and then if the governor or the comptroller or the janitor or anybody else makes a kick, by the Lord I'll refer the matter to the people, and see if they won't indorse the act."

The treasurer looked sympathetic but shocked. The commissioner's voice had grown louder as he rounded off the sentences that, however praiseworthy they might be in sentiment, reflected somewhat upon the capacity of the head of a more or less important department of state. The clerks were beginning to listen.

"Now, Standifer," said the treasurer, soothingly, "you know I'd like to help in this matter, but stop and think a moment, please. Every cent in the treasury is expended only by appropriation made by the legislature, and drawn out by checks issued by the comptroller. I can't control the use of a cent of it. Neither can you. Your department isn't disbursive—it isn't even administrative—it's purely clerical. The only way for the lady to obtain relief is to petition the legislature, and——"

"To the devil with the legislature," said Standifer, turning away.

The treasurer called him back.

"I'd be glad, Standifer, to contribute a hundred dollars personally toward the immediate expenses of Colvin's daughter." He reached for his pocketbook.

"Never mind, Uncle Frank," said the commissioner, in a softer tone, "There's no need of that. She hasn't asked for anything of that sort yet. Besides, her case is in my hands. I see now what a little, rag-tag, bobtail, gotch-eared de-

partment I've been put in charge of. It seems to be about as important as an almanac or a hotel register. But while I'm running it, it won't turn away any daughters of Amos Colvin without stretching its jurisdiction to cover, if possible. You want to keep your eye on the Department of Insurance, Statistics and History."

The commissioner returned to his office, looking thoughtful. He opened and closed an inkstand on his desk many times with extreme and undue attention before he spoke.

"Why don't you get a divorce?" he asked, suddenly.

"I haven't the money to pay for it," answered the lady.

"Just at present," announced the commissioner, in a formal tone, "the powers of my department appear to be considerably string-halted. Statistics seem to be overdrawn at the bank, and History isn't good for a square meal. But you've come to the right place, ma'am. The department will see you through. Where did you say your husband is, ma'am?"

"He was in San Antonio yesterday. He is living there now."

Suddenly the commissioner abandoned his official air. He took the faded little woman's hands in his, and spoke in the old voice he used on the trail and around campfires.

"Your name's Amanda, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. I've heard your dad say it often enough. Well, Amanda, here's your father's best friend, the head of a big office in the state government, that's going to help you out of your troubles. And then here's the old bush-whacker and cowpuncher that your father has helped out of scrapes time and time again wants to ask you a question. Amanda, have you got money enough to run you for the next two or three days?"

Mrs. Sharp's white face flushed the least bit.

"Plenty, sir—for a few days."

"All right, then, ma'am. Now you go back where you are stopping here, and you come to the office again the day

after to-morrow at four o'clock in the afternoon. Very likely by that time there will be something definite to report to you." The commissioner hesitated, and looked a trifle embarrassed. "You said your husband had insured his life for \$5,000. Do you know whether the premiums have been kept paid upon it or not?"

"He paid for a whole year in advance about five months ago," said Mrs. Sharp. "I have the policy and receipts in my trunk."

"Oh, that's all right, then," said Standifer. "It's best to look after things of that sort. Some day they may come in handy."

Mrs. Sharp departed, and soon afterward Luke Standifer went down to the little hotel where he boarded and looked up the railroad timetable in the daily paper. Half an hour later he removed his coat and vest, and strapped a peculiarly constructed pistol holster across his shoulders, leaving the receptacle close under his left armpit. Into the holster he shoved a short-barreled .44 calibre revolver. Putting on his clothes again, he strolled down to the station and caught the five-twenty afternoon train for San Antonio.

The San Antonio *Express* of the following morning contained this sensational piece of news:

BENTON SHARP MEETS HIS MATCH

THE MOST NOTED DESPERADO IN SOUTHWEST TEXAS SHOT TO DEATH IN THE GOLD FRONT RESTAURANT—PROMINENT STATE OFFICIAL SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDS HIMSELF AGAINST THE NOTED BULLY—MAGNIFICENT EXHIBITION OF QUICK GUN PLAY.

Last night about eleven o'clock Benton Sharp, with two other men, entered the Gold Front restaurant and seated themselves at a table. Sharp had been drinking, and was loud and boisterous, as he always was when under the influence of liquor. Five minutes after the party was seated a tall, well-dressed, elderly gentleman entered the restaurant. Few present recognized the Hon. Luke Standifer, the recently appointed Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics and History.

Going over to the same side where Sharp was, Mr. Standifer prepared to take a seat at the next table. In hanging his hat upon one of the hooks along the wall he let it fall upon Sharp's head. Sharp turned, being in an especially ugly humor, and cursed the

other roundly. Mr. Standifer apologized calmly for the accident, but Sharp continued his vituperations. Mr. Standifer was observed to draw near and speak a few sentences to the desperado in so low a tone that no one else caught the words. Sharp sprang up, wild with rage. In the meantime Mr. Standifer had stepped some yards away, and was standing quietly with his arms folded across the breast of his loosely hanging coat.

With that impetuous and deadly rapidity that made Sharp so dreaded, he reached for the gun he always carried in his hip pocket—a movement that has preceded the death of at least a dozen men at his hands. Quick as the motion was, the bystanders assert that it was met by the most beautiful exhibition of lightning gun-pulling ever witnessed in the Southwest. As Sharp's pistol was being raised—and the act was really quicker than the eye could follow—a glittering .44 appeared as if by some conjuring trick in the right hand of Mr. Standifer, who without a perceptible movement of his arm, shot Benton Sharp through the heart. It seems that the new Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics and History has been an old-time Indian fighter and ranger for many years, which accounts for the happy knack he has of handling a .44.

It is not believed that Mr. Standifer will be put to any inconvenience beyond a necessary formal hearing to-day, as all the witnesses who were present unite in declaring that the deed was done in self-defense.

When Mrs. Sharp appeared at the office of the commissioner, according to appointment, she found that gentleman

calmly eating a golden russet apple. He greeted her without embarrassment and without hesitation at approaching the subject that was the topic of the day.

"I had to do it, ma'am," he said, simply, "or get it myself. Mr. Kauffman," he added, turning to the old clerk, "please look up the records of the Security Life Insurance Company and see if they are all right."

"No need to look," grunted Kauffman, who had everything in his head. "It's all O. K. They pay all losses within ten days."

Mrs. Sharp soon rose to depart. She had arranged to remain in town until the policy was paid. The commissioner did not detain her. She was a woman, and he did not know just what to say to her at present. Rest and time would bring her what she needed.

But, as she was leaving, Luke Standifer indulged himself in an official remark.

"The Department of Insurance, Statistics and History, ma'am, has done the best it could with your case. 'Twas a case hard to cover according to red tape. Statistics failed, and History missed fire, but, if I may be permitted to say it, we came out particularly strong on Insurance."



INDIAN SUMMER

THESE are the hours that bring the vanished June
Back to my heart, to warm it as of yore;
These are the days, with all the hush of noon,
That bring remembered sweetness to my door.

Would that her face, now drifted from my sight,
By some great miracle might come to me
Out of the dark of Autumn and the night,
Out of the shattered frame of Memory!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

BEFORE REMBRANDT'S UNKNOWN MAN

By Arthur Stringer

WHY seem these lips, where sorrows weighed,
So wistful now,
And what unspoken tidings made
So dark this brow?

What mean these lonely eyes that wait
So wrapt in gloom,
This stern, sad mouth that asks of Fate
Its final doom?

Here was a Man, who, having yearned
Once toward his own,
Walked desolate, and grimly learned
To die, alone!

And knew, alone the lonely man,
Enisled in space
No futile word nor love could span,
His Night must face!

He found not once companionship,
But lo, how lies
The old, grim challenge on his lip,
And quiet eyes!

How round the gloom of mouth and brow
The old fire sleeps!
And how the stern, sad visage now
Its secret keeps!

THE AMERICAN WIFE

By Harry Thurston Peck

AMERICAN society has at last been definitely established upon a monetary basis. We may deplore the fact, or we may ignore it; but it is a fact, and it is very much the wisest thing to admit it with dispassionate frankness. For if we assume our social standards and conditions to be different from what they really are, how are we going to study them and understand them and get at their philosophy? From the point of view of a scientific observer, the classification of everybody and everything according to a financial principle of division, is a good thing; for it greatly simplifies the whole subject.

Formerly there was no classification of any kind. American life was a chaos, socially, full of all sorts of anomalies and incongruities. Every section of the country had its own standard of distinction, and this standard was recognized and respected nowhere else. Thus, in New England, literary, scholastic, or theological eminence was held to confer a certain *cachet* upon those who had obtained it. In the microcosm of which Philadelphia used to be the center, ancestry counted most of all. This was also true to some extent of the South; yet there, as in the West, political prominence carried with it social leadership. New York—always more or less impossible to formulate—was a place where there existed social wheels within wheels, and social planes that never touched; though, on the whole, perhaps the combination of ancestry and money meant in those days what money alone means at the present time.

The Civil War left everything at sixes

and sevens. There ensued a period of about twenty years—say from 1863 to 1886—during which time no one could very accurately determine who was who or what was what. The shoddy millionaires who had squeezed fortunes out of army contracts, the gold gamblers, the petroleum parvenus and the railroad wreckers swarmed everywhere, flinging their money away because they had not learned how to spend it intelligently. They did not remain long with us as a class. Their vast wooden palaces, representing what some one has cleverly styled "the jig-saw Renaissance," have gone—gone with their cast-iron statuary, their gaudily-flowered carpets, and all the other signs and symbols of their cocktail civilization. Many of these social meteorites lost their money as rapidly as they had made it; so that philosophers of that period used to say, complacently, that no plutocracy could ever be established in this country because what one generation acquired, the next generation would be sure to squander, and thus great fortunes would speedily be scattered and revert to the nation's common stock of wealth.

This was true for a time; and the period of which we have been speaking established nothing. It did, however, lead to the disintegration of the older social fabric such as it had been. If the shoddy millionaires accomplished nothing else, at least they got on the nerves of the *ante-bellum* respectabilities, and they unsettled the mind of the younger people; and so after a fashion they prepared the way for their successors—for the millionaires who have learned how to use their money and also how to keep

it, and how to hand it down from father to son as securely as the great landed estates of England are transmitted under the law of primogeniture. In fact, it is handed down more surely still; for the alienation of an English estate and the breaking of an entail are not unusual incidents, and beggared peers are easy to be found; whereas in this country, no one ever expects to see an impoverished Vanderbilt or a bankrupt Astor. We have all accepted the idea that the immense fortunes now held by certain families will continue in those families; and through this element of permanence there has become possible the establishment of an aristocracy based upon the perpetual possession of money.

Suppose now, we compare our system with the English system and see what social groups in ours approximately correspond to certain well-recognized and well-defined social groups in theirs. The few enormously wealthy families of which the head enjoys an assured annual income of more than a million dollars may be regarded as representing in the American Republic what the "royalties" represent in England. Popular phraseology indeed gives them, with unconscious fitness, quasi-royal titles in styling them "oil kings," "money kings" and "mining kings." Most of them live as few real kings can afford to live; and they receive from their immediate *entourage* something of the obsequious deference which in monarchical lands is given to those who are of the royal blood. Coming down a grade, we have the somewhat larger group of those whose incomes range from a million of dollars down to a hundred thousand. These individuals, as a class, are our equivalent of the British peerage—the nine-hundred-thousand-dollar magnate having, let us say, the relative rank of a duke, while the others represent a descending scale of dignity, and are respectively the equals of marquises, earls, viscounts and barons. Then come what we may style, in British terminology, the "upper middle classes"—persons with incomes ranging from a hundred thousand dollars a year to twenty thou-

sand. Social classification ends with the final group of families who we may collectively describe as the "lower middle classes," having incomes of not more than twenty thousand dollars and not less than five thousand.

This is, I think, approximately a reasonable grouping, and one that is fairly true to the facts of American life to-day. Moreover, these facts are not to be made a subject for regret or for demagogic ranting, since, on the whole, the classification has a social *raison d'être*, and therefore a sort of justification. It is idle to say that many men and many women who do not enter into even the lowest of these classes are more refined, more clever, and more accomplished than some of those who belong to the financial peerage or even to the "royal" group. That is the sort of remark that could readily be made, and that, in fact, is often made with reference to the English system also. Many an English *terrae filius* has all the marks of gentle breeding, while many a peer is *louche à faire fremir*. The vulgarity of an English duchess, when an English duchess happens to be vulgar, exceeds in offensiveness the vulgarity of any *Arriet* on a Bank Holiday. The late Queen's uncles were startling specimens of uncouth clowns; while one might search the streets all day without finding anywhere so perfect and precious a combination of blackguard and buffoon as was George IV. Yet all this is irrelevant and the instances are sporadic. It stands to reason that one who, either because of his birth, or because of his money has been surrounded from childhood by every possible refinement of art and training, and who has the consciousness of power with the habit of command—it stands to reason, I say, that such an individual must in nine cases out of ten possess gifts and qualities which will justify his position of superiority in a purely social sense.

Finally, this division of our people into classes, and this practical separation of class from class is not an arbitrary and unnatural thing. It is not forced. It is not the result nor the ac-

companionment of a snobbish feeling of "exclusiveness." It is simply inevitable, and comes about of itself. There is very little real snobbishness among our plutocrats—at least among the men. If the family with the fifty-thousand-dollar income does not usually have intimate relations with the family possessed of a million-dollar income, this is not primarily because the latter has so willed it. It is because the two families have wholly different standards of expenditure, and therefore different ways of living. The fifty-thousand-dollar family cannot do the things which the other family does. It cannot keep up the same sort of an establishment or give the same sort of entertainments, or, in general, live at the same pace; and hence, very sensibly, it does not try to do so. There is no question of one set being essentially "better" than the other. The two are simply upon different planes, and possess quite different environments.

All this discussion seems, perhaps, exceedingly remote from the topic suggested by the title of the present paper; yet, in reality, it clears the way for a consideration of it. If we are searching for a well-defined social type, in which one of the groups described above are we most likely to discover it? Surely, not among the multimillionaires, who are necessarily few in number, and whose lives and general conditions are quite exceptional. Nor shall we find in it what has been styled, for convenience sake, the American "peerage"; since this group differs only in degree and not in kind from the other class. The true type will most assuredly be found among those whom I have styled the lower middle class—the class of persons who in every country embody and exhibit whatever is most characteristic of that country—the general comfort, the general culture, the social atmosphere, in fine the influences which make the nation what it is. The members of this class are neither rich nor poor. On one side, they are in touch with the great body of the population; on another side, they feel the influence of the classes whose wealth has set

them more definitely apart from the proletariat. The possessors of incomes ranging from five thousand to twenty thousand dollars represent, mainly, the commercial life in which only a fair degree of success has been attained, and also the professional life which has received rather more than the usual reward. The men are comfortable business men, or they are lawyers, physicians, authors, editors, artists, clergymen or university professors. They have usually made their own way in the world, and are still laboring not so much to improve their position as to retain the place which they have won. They represent some of the best traditions of American life. They are the file-leaders of democracy; and so both they and theirs may be selected as affording fit subjects for social study. When one speaks of the American wife, therefore, he must be understood as meaning the married woman who belongs to this particular stratum of American society. What is she like, and how does she differ from her sisters of a corresponding class in other countries, such as France and England?

The first thing that a foreigner observes in meeting her—and it is the one thing that he remembers longest—is her absolutely impenetrable independence amounting almost to irresponsibility and *insouciance*, her remarkable detachment from her husband's cares and labors. In England a man's wife is in reality his partner; and whether or not the two are in harmony with each other in affection, in all material things they recognize that their fortunes are irrevocably bound together; that the interests of both are quite identical, and that each has just as strong a motive for making things go well as has the other, since they share equally the labor and the reward of labor. They may have their private disagreements; but they front the world together. The wife takes the keenest interest in the most minute details of everything that affects her husband's welfare. She knows his income to a penny. She manages her household as a Chancellor of the Exchequer manages the nation's

outlay, so that the annual budget shall not only avoid a deficit and shall accurately balance, but so that it shall show a surplus. She will practice a rigid economy if necessary, and in doing so she will feel that she is merely carrying out her share of the marriage contract. It is the man's part to make money; it is her part to help him save it. She plans nothing for herself apart from him; she cannot think of him as in anything apart from her. If he is in political life, she enters into his ambitions with intelligence and zeal. She will write his letters for him and entertain his constituents; she will study the blue-books and teach herself to understand the public questions with which he has to deal, so that she may discuss them with him, and follow his career intelligently. She belongs to him in fact, as he belongs to her. There is not much display of sentiment in an English household after the first year of married life has ended; but there is the bond of a common interest which grows stronger every day and every year, and which gives to man and wife a unity of purpose and of feeling that will beyond comparison outlast the cobweb tissues of emotionalism.

In France, the wife's absorption in her husband's interests is even more intense, in proportion as the life of a typical French *ménage* is narrower than that of an English household. Americans have a curiously false conception of the domestic conditions which prevail in France. The sort of French rovel that is written in Paris largely for export to the United States and Russia is probably responsible for our offensive and thoroughly *bizarre* imaginings. The French wife, as viewed through the lenses held before our eyes by Messieurs de Maupassant, Prévost, Mendès and Ginisty, is a sensuous, fascinating creature whose time is wholly spent in sly intrigue, and whose education is confined to the conjugation of the verb *tromper*. The average American is willing to believe all this, because he thinks he knows that French marriages are entirely commercial in their character, and void of love; and

he contrasts them unfavorably with our superior system, according to which a young girl's sentimental education begins while she is in short frocks, continues through a series of summer-night flirtations and "straw-rides," and lands her at the altar only after she has been promiscuously pawed by half her male acquaintance. The American in his ignorance knows nothing of the intense decorum of the typical French family, the myriad conventionalities which no one dreams of violating, the purity of thought and life and the perfect devotion and respect which make the best domestic life in France ideal. Nor does he know how the very narrowness of that life comes from the fact that the members of a French household are sufficient unto themselves in the completeness of their union. So true is the old saying that the English-speaking people have the word for "home," while the French, although they do not have the word, possess the thing itself. The French family, in fact, constitutes the indivisible unit in the sum of nationality; and in the family, the wife is but the husband's other self, his mate, his partner, his thorough comrade, his loyal friend.

But the American wife? Henry James has summed up the American wife in just one sentence. He says: "The American wife knows nothing of her husband's affairs—except that they are of not the slightest consequence." This is both epigrammatic and exactly true. The American wife has quite a genuine affection for her husband. Even after years of marriage have gone by, she thinks of him with unaffected friendliness. He is so useful! She credits him with almost all the virtues, except perhaps the virtue of being interesting, and she overlooks that one defect of his with charitable toleration. She sees him come and go each day with clock-like regularity. She vaguely knows what his profession or vocation is. She thinks better of him if it is a profession or vocation that is generally regarded as quite creditable; but this is practically all she knows or cares about it. She sees him rising early and hurry-

ing to his office. She hears him sitting late into the night in the room overhead; and she is probably aware that he is immersed in a great sea of papers and documents of some kind or other—tiresome and stupid things that he will persist in bringing home and fussing over. She finds that he must sometimes stay in town all through the summer when the thermometer is in the nineties and when the sickly heat sweats on the very walls or sizzles on the pavement. She thinks it very inconsiderate of him to do this. She would really rather have him go with her to the cool, wind-swept nook that she selects for her own summer's outing. Just why he does not go, she cannot possibly imagine. It is one of the curious, irrational traits which he possesses and which prevent her from taking him quite seriously. Perhaps he will run up there for a day or two; and when he does come she is very nice to him, apart from scolding him a little for getting so hideously thin and shallow. But he is not particularly comfortable there. He follows her meekly into the dining-room three times a day for a while, and then he has to go back to whatever it is that he does in town. Just what it is, she doesn't know. The household bills are paid; the checks come to her regularly. She does the things she likes to do, and sometimes dimly recognizes the fact that it is pleasant to have somebody to see that her various projects and arrangements all come out so nicely. Her husband is really quite what a husband ought to be. He does his duty perfectly, and she has a very accurate notion of what that duty is. To provide whatever she requires, to fetch and carry at her bidding, to leave her absolutely free from care, responsibility or worry—such is the whole duty of the American husband.

And then, she is so very sure of him! It never enters her head that he has anything to wish for, that he can possibly be conscious of a void somewhere in life, or experience even the faintest stirring of dissatisfaction; that he could ever imagine anything different from

what he has; that he might ever dream of an existence where he should be something better than the household banker, a glorified butler, a superior *maitre d'hôtel*. She is absolutely satisfied with herself and absolutely sure of him. She does not want another kind of husband, so why should he desire a different sort of wife?

The most curious feature of this whole situation is that she is absolutely right. He really doesn't. The good, kind, patient creature is quite as satisfied as she is. She is perfectly correct in being sure of him. He is even pleased that she should have her own way completely, and that she should allow him the privilege of ministering to her wants and relieving her of all responsibility. It is this sublime self-immolation, this cheerful unconsciousness of sacrifice which transforms the typical American husband from a drudge to a devotee, and which raises him above the level of contempt. If, indeed, we look at the thing philosophically, we shall find that this differentiation of interest between the American husband and the American wife is by no means the latter's fault alone. It is traditional in our system, and it arises from the peculiar feeling which the American man entertains regarding his own responsibilities and regarding what is due to woman. It is a primary article of his creed that the hard work of life is wholly man's, the duties are man's, the responsibilities are man's. To woman, on the other hand, belong both ease and pleasure; and hers alone are the rights and privileges. It would give him a guilty sort of feeling if he were to trouble her with any of the cares and worries that beset his path in life. It makes him proud to think that he can shield her from all save the most inevitable anxieties, and he takes it as a matter of course that the professional and material side of his own existence should have no possible interest for her. It must be admitted, also, as a further motive, that he may have some undefined and lurking dread lest she should intermeddle; and he marks out, therefore, independence for himself in his ex-

ternal life, while giving her an equal independence in those interests which are social and domestic.

This theory is all essentially American, and the source of it is a motive that, in a way, is rather fine. None the less, it is a mistake; for it results in a curious disparity between men and women in our country, with respect to their intellectual development and general cultivation. The men know, first of all, that which belongs to their own occupation, and only secondarily and in a much less degree that which belongs to liberal culture. They do not read widely and systematically. They seldom possess accomplishments; and when they meet each other, their conversation nearly always degenerates into "shop." They are very keen and very clever, and even their "shop" is interesting; but it is narrow and limited and it dwarfs them mentally and spiritually. The women, on the other hand, having ample time, and caring nothing about the things which interest their husbands, are very apt to train their minds, or at least to acquire a good deal of miscellaneous knowledge. They know something of the languages; they have a variety of accomplishments; they cultivate their taste; and they do things, when they do them, very well.

The chief objection is, however, that each sex is a distinct loser in every

way by its practical isolation from the other. The men fall into an intellectual rut, and their thought and its expression lack grace and ease and elegance—all of which they might possess did they but share their occupations and their confidences with their wives. On the other hand, the women, by shutting out the masculine element from their cultivation, come to be possessed of a habit of mind which is superficially brilliant and exceedingly attractive, but which lacks strength, stability and poise. This is what Professor Münsterberg had in mind when he deplored the fact that American society and the tone of American thought are becoming "feminized"; and this is very true. Indeed, our whole national spirit would be improved could the men and the women share more fully, the one in the pleasure and the other in the work. Could we in this learn something from the English and the French, our men would be less crude, more entertaining and more worthy of a serious respect, while our women would be far less frivolous, more serious-minded, and more purposeful. In fact, were this unity of interest to be added to the qualities which exist already in our domestic life, our country could assert, unchallenged, its claim that the home life of its most truly representative class is in every way ideal.



AFTER WATTEAU

THIRCIS, jealousy at heart,
Said to his Lisette, "Return
My shepherd's crook, since we must part—
The ribbon and the dog you spurn."

The shepherdess, with lashes wet,
Asked, tenderly, "And all your kisses,
Can you so easily forget?
Nay, sir; you must take back those blisses."

THOMAS WALSH.

IT'S AN ILL WIND

By Marie Manning

Author of "Lord Alingham, Bankrupt"

NEWPORT had talked of nothing else for forty-eight hours, which was chiefly remarkable inasmuch as the all-absorbing topic was neither scandal, nor yet, in the Newport acceptance of the term, precisely a "good story."

Mrs. Almquist, whose patriotism still prompted her to leave England annually for the necessary number of weeks in which to carry the burden of the Newport season, whispered to her son's wife over the cup that cheers and sometimes promotes confidences, that she had never heard of anything like it in all her experience.

Young Mrs. Almquist urged a bit more of the cup. She was so honestly curious to know the approximate number of years embraced in so extended a period. But the older lady had not been playing the rôle of social Atlas all these decades for nothing. She took the proffered second helping and relapsed into a conspicuous silence, leaving her daughter-in-law to reflect on the inconvenience of living in a country where these little family matters cannot be settled by a glance at Burke or Debrett.

The good bishop, who was Mrs. Almquist's next door cliff-dweller, and who was as human as his multiplicity of chins implied, was delighted to find the cottagers so innocently engrossed. He had known them long; and seldom, indeed, had innocuous incident kept them so quiet. In fact, the episcopal complacency had been threatening to burst bounds all the afternoon. Was not this disposition on the part of society to content itself with less stimulating amusement directly attributable to those

principles of charity and forbearance that he had been enabled to dispense from the mahogany rather than from the pulpit? For the bishop had no church in that summer stronghold of magnificent inconsistencies. Like the farmer in the ballad, he had married "a widow with a cottage"—but the analogy terminated with the conformity of terms—there being cottages and cottages, as there are widows and widows.

The episcopal see was not in Newport, and the frivolous flock that nibbled at his precepts had never heard of him till he married the Widow Bates, since which auspicious event he had done his shepherding from the head of her table and far from the seat of the episcopal power, which was vaguely supposed to be situated somewhere in the Middle West. There were those who did not hesitate to place Bishop Bunch's former diocese even farther away, but suspicious people grow daily more prevalent.

The good bishop—bishops are universally good in print—was most anxious to have a word with Mrs. Stephen Fowl on "the subject" before dinner. He saw by the hall clock that if he hastened—the bishop never hurried—he would in all probability be in time for a cup of Mrs. Fowl's excellent tea. He adjusted the top hat he wore even in summer, and with a passing regret that episcopal habiliments in the United States do not include gaiters, for the bishop had a calf—turned his steps in the direction of Mrs. Stephen Fowl's.

Mrs. Fowl was a great lady, so great, indeed, that she could afford to indulge herself in the quaint pose of being abso-

lutely natural. Her aspect of perfect distinction was summed up in the one succinct phrase—no fads. She was drinking tea with milk in it when the bishop arrived. She called it milk, too, when she asked him if he would take it, or if he preferred his tea clear to-day?

There was no time for amiable circumlocution. Both the lady and the ecclesiastic felt that which must be discussed confidentially, must be discussed quickly—time was short and callers threatening.

"You have heard?" queried the lady.

The bishop presented a countenance as impassive as a Chinese diplomat when a political question is asked.

"Then you haven't heard?" checked the lady, while her eyes threatened to change the conversation to all manner of irrelevant subjects.

The bishop permitted his countenance to speak English.

"A most distressing circumstance. I hear her aunt, Mrs. Melanite, has offered to take her to Europe."

"It would have been far better if Mrs. Melanite had given her a new hat in the first place, instead of reducing the poor child to such drastic expedients. If it were a scandal, the poor girl might live it down. I've had to call on scandals scores of times—and have them to dinner, too, for political reasons, but this is such an indefinite sort of thing!"

"But, my dear lady," said the bishop, duly thankful that Mrs. Fowl remembered the rather redundant number of lumps he took in his tea, "surely you do not mean that it were better to have scandal touch the fair name of Miss Brompton than that this—this—*contre-temps*, which, after all, is only somewhat absurd—should have happened."

"But, my dear bishop, every one saw them—it—they drove the entire length of the drive and back again, several times—every one bowing to them. The fact is incontrovertible; whereas, if it had been a scandal no one could have been absolutely certain."

"The Almighty, my dear lady, is always—"

"Pardon me, bishop, I was referring

to mere man— Besides, there are so many ethical societies for the propagation of scandal—I mean the promotion of sympathy. Take our own guild, bishop, the 'Speak Kindly Words.'"

"A most noble organization," assented the bishop.

"But aren't people beginning to abuse its privileges, if one has got to remain speechless over the shortcomings of one's friends? Where is the line to be drawn?"

A caller was announced. Mrs. Fowl rose to greet her. "My dear, I am afraid the tea is cold, I'll send for some more."

"Please don't. As the youngest of a large family, my cup was always lukewarm when it came to my turn. Cold tea always seems so much more homelike—I've never had it since my marriage."

The bishop looked tentatively toward his hat.

"I've heard a bit of news," said the caller who preferred cold tea. "Archie Vanderpoel is going to marry Maud Brompton."

"An excellent thing," beamed the bishop.

"That will adjust things beautifully," assented Mrs. Fowl.

"Do you know," said the caller who preferred cold tea, "I shouldn't be surprised if the entire thing were contrived—Maud is so horribly clever."

To explain the brewing of the tempest in this particular teapot of high degree, some knowledge of the Brompton girls is necessary. There were three of them, and friends with an affection for platitudes called them the Three Graces.

No mere man could ever make up his mind which was the best looking. Women, however, made invidious distinctions—they called Elinor the tall Miss Brompton; Maud, the witty Miss Brompton, and Grace, the Miss Brompton who looked like Raphael's Madonna of the Chair.

Having been so liberally endowed with beauty, that first requisite of all heroines, the Brompton girls should also have been fabulously rich, and had a bewildering array of gowns for every

occasion. But, as a matter of fact, their poverty was as proverbial as that of the church mouse, and far more difficult of concealment. Maud used to say that a poor girl is not necessarily known by the company she keeps, but by the rich relations whose clothes she wears. And as the Bromptons towered head and shoulders above the Melanites, the rich relations aforesaid, particularly daring expedients were often necessary when it came to making Melanite gowns cover Brompton inches.

Archie Vanderpoel knew that the Bromptons were poor, and it seemed to him, when he tried to consider the matter impartially, that it must be this unfamiliar element of poverty, this lack of steam yacht, private car and frowning cottage on the cliff that made them so absolutely charming. For Archie had no poor relations—they were steam-yacht folk, even to the farthest limits of fourth cousinhood. As he often said, there was no excuse for such gross and unvaried prosperity except for its pointing out the disadvantages of having had a great-grandfather who landed in the country without a penny in his pocket. With such a family record as that, there was no escaping steam yachts in the third generation.

Archie always made a point, therefore, of being particularly nice to Mrs. Melanite, the Brompton aunt, who was in the habit of entertaining the Three Graces serially, as Maud always put it. Aunt Melanite did not believe in having two pretty girls in the house at the same time. She invariably opened the campaign with Elinor, continued with Maud, and concluded with Grace. Archie appeared equally devoted to all of them, and as they had now visited Aunt Melanite for a matter of three seasons and "nothing definite had been said," Aunt Melanite naturally began to harbor a secret resentment toward that most eligible of young men. With Archie it was nothing more than a case of that strange and unusual malady, self-depreciation.

"Why," he asked himself over innumerable cigars, "should such a girl as Maud Brompton"—he had never con-

fused the Graces—"have an interest in a man like me, a loafer by profession, a leader of cotillions, a knight of the tea table—a living illustration of the thrift of one's great-grandfather?"

Then he smoked more cigars, and finally braced himself to the point of writing a note to Maud and asking her to drive with him the next afternoon in a droshky that had just arrived from St. Petersburg. Was there any significance in driving with a girl in a droshky? He devoutly hoped there was. Perhaps it was like the buggy of less pretentious social strata—a visible sign of acquiescence that he who gaped might read. He confided his hopes and fears to the lumbering, low-built vehicle and awaited the answer to his letter.

It came with an accompanying moment of perturbation—would she, or would she not? She would be pleased to drive with him the following afternoon, and she was his sincerely, Maud Brompton. Brief, noncommittal, but acquiescent. He tried to classify the indefinable aroma about it. Was it the barest hint of orris or just the suggestion of her slender fingers? Or the subtle influence of femininity? He thought of these things, smoking in the meantime like a furnace. At the end of his bachelor reverie an impartial judge could have detected nothing about the little white note but a strong odor of tobacco.

And now for the other side of the medal. Maud had the best of all reasons for accepting the invitation. She honestly cared for Archie Vanderpoel, and if it had not been for all that stupid money she would long ago have found ways and means of—I leave you to imagine. But, according to her system of ethics, it seemed to be taking an unfair advantage of the steam yacht, the private car and the frowning cottage on the cliff—you see the thrifty old great-grandfather had much to answer for.

Maud therefore accepted the invitation as a bit of frank self-indulgence, and no thought of an epoch-making experience. And then, being poor, and absolutely feminine, she turned her attention to the all-important question of "What shall I wear?"

A blue linen with amazing intricacies of white duck seemed just the thing—but what should she do for an accompanying hat? Aunt Melanite had failed to contribute her annual hat that summer, and Maud's best, an immense cart-wheel affair, blossoming like a laurel-bush, was absolutely out of the question for driving. The only alternative her wardrobe afforded was a meagre affair with a ribbon band and quill—it suggested the multiplication table in hats, stacks of them piled on a counter, as like as peas in a pod, and loathsomely cheap as to price.

Maud contemplated this hat from every point of view. It seemed hopeless. And then—but thereby hangs my tale. She took two or three turns up and down the room. She opened her trunk. She took out something—she scrutinized it—she put it against the blue and white linen gown and found that it matched perfectly. "Why shouldn't I?" she asked, addressing nothing in particular. "It's outrageous, but who will ever know?"

There was no one present to counsel prudence, and in less time than it takes to tell it Maud had adjusted her thimble and was trimming the obnoxious hat with what was apparently a soft pale blue and white silk scarf. The silken thing—whatever it was—took on the most bewitching lights; it covered the ugly straw hat with the most beautiful undulating folds; it promised to be a "dream of a hat." But something was needed for the side, where the ends of that silken makeshift joined, and, looking about the room, Miss Brompton's gaze fell on a peacock-feather duster. Twitching out the most iridescent eye, she tried it and found it just the finishing touch. It was a daring creation—"but it carried," to speak in the jargon of the trade. No one but an artist—or a milliner who asked unscrupulous prices—would have hazarded that combination of blue, white and vivid iridescence.

Maud set it on her gold head and took up the handglass. "It is fetching enough for the hallmark of a Cox label," was her solitary comment.

She had expected that a hat at once so novel and so becoming would create some little ripple of attention, but that it should be the cynosure of all eyes was quite a different matter. More inexplicable still was the fact that the hat seemed to receive momentarily increased attention. The passing glances that she had at first attributed to the droshky were undoubtedly leveled at her hat. It was not altogether an unmixed sensation of gratification. Had it borne the Cox label she would have been absolutely sure of herself—but this hat of her own fancy! "Had the Warrenton girl turned?" Maud fancied she had, but could not turn around to see.

"They seem to take an amazing interest in this droshky," Vanderpoel remarked as Mrs. Almquist leaned forward to bow—an unheard thing for Mrs. Almquist.

"Er—who was that Russian attaché who drove one here?" Maud asked, aimlessly.

The Warrenton girl had turned and was again driving past them. Miss Brompton's cheeks felt hot and prickly. She wished she had declined the drive.

"The humor of the American millionaire is still in the stone age," said Archie, indicating with his whip a Titanic structure. "Fancy building a thing of those dimensions on a little front lawn, suburban size."

"But they make such beautiful souvenirs for divorced husbands to leave their wives—expensive, troublesome to keep open. Oh, they represent any amount of boomerang amenities!"

He took a parting glance over his shoulder at the offending structure, and then he knew why the droshky had attracted so much attention. Fluttering straight in the afternoon breeze, to the extent of full half a yard, there flapped a pale blue and white silk stocking!

It was a far cry from steam yachts, private cars and cottages on the cliffs to such makeshifts as this. But what a little brick she was to do it! What pluck! And, by Jove, what a stunning hat it had been before that infernal wind began to play tricks! Quite unconsciously Maud chatted on. She had be-

come used to the amount of attention she was attracting. Archie was really the most delightful of companions.

Atavistic influences were asserting themselves; the Dutch thrift that had spurred on old Jacob Vanderpoel into proposing to his wife, Wilhelmina, after having seen her pare a potato without an atom of waste, spurred his descendant into something very closely resembling eagerness. He could never tell,

afterward, how he scared up the courage, but as she sat beside him, quite unmindful of the flapping silk stocking, she had never seemed so accessible, so altogether human and capable of being won.

As for the girl, she knew nothing of the silk stocking until she had been engaged quite two hours. And as for Mrs. Almquist, the bishop and the rest—but why waste time considering them?



THE FISHERS ARE SAILING

By Bliss Carman

THE fishers are sailing; the fleet is away;
The rowlocks are throbbing at break of day.

The cables are creaking; the sails are unfurled;
The red sun is over the rim of the world.

The first summer hour is white on the hill;
The sails in the harbor-mouth belly and fill,—

Each boat putting out with the breast of a gull
For the mighty great deep that shall rock them and lull.

There, there, they all pass out of sight, one by one,
Gleam, dazzle, and sink in the path of the sun,—

The last tiny speck to melt out and be free
As a roseleaf of cloud on the rim of the sea.

LINES

WHAT of the men of Mars,
 And maids of Mercury?
 What of the loves and wars,
 These swirling systems see?

How do the Moon-folk fare?
 What ships ply Saturn's seas?
 And what brave races rare,
 Throng the proud Pleiades?



OLD and yet young, the jocund earth,
 Doth speed among the spheres,
 Her children of imperial birth,
 Are all the golden years.

The happy orb sweeps on,
 Led by some vague unrest,
 Some mystic hint of joys unborn,
 Springing within her breast.



THE races rise and fall,
 The nations come and go,
 Time tenderly doth cover all,
 With violets and snow.

The mortal tide moves on
 To some immortal shore,
 Past purple peaks of dusk and dawn,
 Into the evermore.



WHERE are the legioned dead
 Of all the pallid past?
 Out of the flesh they sped,
 On to the unknown vast.

Tented upon the air?
 By valiant spirits led?
 How and when,—and where,—
 Where are the legioned dead?

ROBERT LOVEMAN.

EVENING IN VENICE

GLIDE on, my boat, to the oar's low croon,
 The Lido waits, and the rising moon
 Silvers a path through the broad lagoon—
 Glide on, my boat.

Peace, troubled heart, for the stars shine bright,
 And sorrow fades with the waning light—
 A veil of comfort drops from the night—
 Peace, troubled heart.

Listen, a song floats mellow and clear
 Over the water: hope and good cheer.
 And faith in loving and all things dear—
 Listen, a song.

Glide on, my boat, to the oar's low croon,
 The Lido waits, and the rising moon
 Silvers a path through the broad lagoon—
 Glide on, my boat.



EPILOGUE

IT is good, dear heart, to have seen the sun,
 To have felt one's youth and the joys thereof:
 To have dreamed fair dreams, when the day was done,
 Of the world-old miracles, hope and love.

It is well to have known pain's icy breath,
 To have measured with sorrow, face to face,
 To have learned grim truths from the lips of death,
 To have heard care follow, and won the race.

And now, at the last, when the sun rides west,
 And time and the twilight let down the bars
 That guard the crossing—ah me, it is best
 To pay toll of all to faith and the stars!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.

BLIGHT

By John D. Barry

Author of "The Congressman's Wife," "Mademoiselle Blanche," Etc.

"WHEN did it come?" Mrs. Brewer asked curtly, her voice conveying a reprimand.

Agnes Davidson replied quietly: "I told you—yesterday."

"You might have come over."

Clara Brewer surveyed the crowded drawing-room. Her sister's gaze followed her, apprehensively, seeking for something that might be in danger of criticism.

"Let me see the letter again." Clara Brewer extended her hand, half closing her handsome dark eyes. She turned to the last page and read: "So I have decided that it would be a mistake for me to stay in England any longer. His relatives have been kind to me; but there is a difference. In New York I shall, at least, be near my own people and my own friends. As I grow older I feel more strongly the home ties and the old friendships. And of all the old friends, dear Agnes, there is no one whom I long more earnestly to see than you."

Mrs. Brewer put the letter on the table, bending forward and smoothing it out with her gloved fingers. "Not one reference to him."

"She couldn't speak of him," said Agnes Davidson.

"I should think she couldn't," promptly remarked her sister, converting the defense into an accusation. As Agnes said nothing, Clara pressed her point. "After the way she treated him!" she exclaimed bitterly.

"She did what she thought she ought to do. It was as hard for her, harder than for him."

"Oh, you are always saying that," exclaimed Clara, her eyes gleaming. She

apparently wished to affirm that the repetition of an argument destroyed it, though repetition was a weakness of her own. "She drove him back to that creature."

Agnes Davidson's attitude said: "Well, have it so if you will." Agnes was one of those women who by a patient manner can confound almost any argument and easily exasperate an excitable antagonist. "What is she going to do when she gets here?" Clara Brewer challenged.

"I suppose she will take an apartment."

"In June?"

Agnes hesitated, gathering courage. "I think I may ask her to stay with me."

"H'm! That's what I wanted to get at. I knew you——"

"We shall be at Riverdale then," said Agnes, serene again now that the worst was over. "Gerald seldom comes up, you know. He's nearly always at the club, or down at the seashore."

"She's timed her coming very cleverly," said Clara, with a sneer.

"I don't know what you mean," Agnes remarked, in an air that conveyed: "I refuse absolutely to pay attention to your insinuations."

"Well, all I can say is that I think your behavior is very strange. There's that woman, who has been the means of bringing the most terrible trouble into our lives—disgrace, yes, *disgrace*, Agnes Davidson. You needn't look at me like that. When she threw Gerald over she drove him back to that creature. She might have saved him. She might have made a man of him——" Clara Brewer turned her head away, her eyes full of tears, "instead of what

she has done." She drew out her handkerchief and, enveloping one finger with it, touched the corners of her eyes. "Anyway, she's been punished."

"Yes. She's been very unhappy," Agnes said gently. "She made a mistake in marrying as she did, and the loss of her child must have nearly killed her. She's so affectionate——"

"Affectionate!" Clara repeated scornfully. "Her affection is like her religion. Once let it come in conflict with her pride and away it goes!" she concluded, snapping her fingers.

"She is proud," Agnes agreed. "I've heard her acknowledge that herself. I believe she is truly religious, too. Her religion must have helped her in her troubles."

"It didn't keep her from applying for a divorce," said her sister, triumphantly.

"She withdrew that when her husband fell ill. She went back to India and took care of him till he died."

"Well, all I can say is that if you ask her to your house after what's happened you will show very little respect or regard for your brother."

"After ten years?" Agnes said in a low voice.

"Yes, after a lifetime. The harm she did to him will last for a lifetime—for the time that creature lives, at any rate."

"It will be hard for her to hear about that," Agnes went on. "For that reason I almost wish she weren't coming. She will find Gerald very much changed."

II.

That afternoon, shortly after Clara Brewer started to walk up Madison Avenue to her house in West Thirtieth street, Gerald Davidson returned home. He was a slim man of medium size, with a sensitive blond face, blue eyes and pointed chin. His thick brown hair was touched with gray; but his mustache retained its pale yellow. Fine wrinkles made a web around his eyes, and two deep lines of pain ran from his nose past either corner of his

small mouth. He walked slowly. He always looked tired.

As he passed through the hall he glanced into the drawing-room. No one was there, and he went upstairs. At the door of the library he stopped, observing his sister writing at the big mahogany table.

"Hello, Agnes," he said. "How are you?"

She looked up, smiling. He thought her eyes seemed unusually bright. "Oh, Gerald," she said, in a tone that invited him to enter the room.

He leaned on the edge of the desk. "I was going to tell you that I shouldn't be home to-night."

"Clara has been here," she said, as if his remark was too familiar to require comment.

"How is she?" he asked, carelessly. "All right?"

"Yes." She hesitated. "She came just after I received a letter from Edith Bentley—Edith Stanton, I mean."

He had been staring absently at the blotter on the desk, his head bent forward. Without moving his head, he raised his eyes. "Oh!" he said.

"Edith is coming back."

He looked fixedly at his sister, without a change of expression. "Here?"

"She's going to live in New York—to settle down, she says."

He nodded his head slowly, without speaking.

"She will arrive at about the time we leave here for Riverdale. From the tone of her letter I suspect she'd be glad to come to me for a little while. Clara seems to think I ought not to ask her."

He rose heavily to his feet. "What nonsense!" he said. "Ask her by all means. What difference will it make? I shall be at the club—unless I decide to run down to Maine for a few weeks."

"Wouldn't you care to see her again, Gerald?"

"Why, yes," he said good-humoredly. "I'd like to see Edith first rate. That is, of course, if she'd care to see me. The last time I saw her she didn't have a very high opinion of me. But that's so long ago," he concluded, vaguely.

"She doesn't know that you are living with me," Agnes went on, determined to be frank. "I suppose she thinks you are still practicing in Albany. If she did know——"

"She wouldn't come. Well, I can't see that there's any particular use in telling her. I shan't be in Riverdale while she's there—that is, to stay. That's the great point." He hesitated, as if thinking that his sister still had something to add. Then he walked slowly toward the door.

"Gerald."

"Well?"

Agnes Davidson kept her eyes from her brother's face. She nervously fingered the rings on both her hands. "Gerald, you know how bitter Clara is against Edith."

He smiled faintly. "I thought she'd got over that years ago."

Agnes shook her head. "She blames Edith." She lifted her face; tears stood in her eyes. "She blames Edith because—well, because you've never married, Gerald."

"That is extremely silly of her," he said with an angry flush. "I should think she might learn to mind her own business by this time."

"She'll never do that," said Agnes, patiently. "But I was thinking, Gerald—you won't think I'm interfering, will you? I know that Edith regrets the way she treated you years ago. If you——"

"If that's what you have in mind," he interrupted with quiet severity. "you're wasting your time. I'd give up those romantic notions, my dear."

He left her, feeling that she had made a silly mistake. It took from her the hope she had been indulging since the letter came. She closed the door and for several minutes she cried silently. She had never spoken resentfully about the situation that had caused her sister so much bitterness; but she had felt none the less deeply. It was not what Clara called the "disgrace" that distressed her; she cared little for that, though, in her thirty-nine years of unmarried life, she had been repeatedly told that the Davidsons had always kept

themselves from such entanglements. It was the blight that had fallen on her brother's life. She would gladly have made any sacrifice that might add to his happiness; it was hard that the only sacrifice she could make should be the abstinence from any attempt to help him.

III.

Two days after Edith Stanton arrived in New York, she went to Riverdale to visit Agnes Davidson. The old friends who heard of the visit were astonished. Then they recalled that, at the time when the engagement between Edith Bentley and Gerald Davidson was broken, though Clara Brewer had been vicious in her denunciation, Agnes had been loyal to the companion of her school days. Some of them wondered if Edith and Gerald would meet again. A few expressed a languid interest in the chance that the old romance might be revived; others refrained from discussing the possibility. Gerald Davidson had become an awkward topic.

Agnes Davidson was shocked by the change in Edith Stanton's looks. Ten years before Edith had been a radiant young woman of twenty-seven, graceful, alert, bright-eyed and with full, red cheeks. She had become a pale, middle-aged woman, her dark hair streaked with gray. In character, Agnes thought that Edith had deepened and broadened; where she had been impulsive, and, in her judgments, almost fanatically severe, she had become subdued, patient and gentle. In their first interview she asked frankly for Gerald and for Clara. She expressed surprise on hearing that Gerald had given up his practice and had come to live in New York. "He used to love his work so," she said, and Agnes replied:

"He loved the theory of medicine; but I don't think he ever cared much for the work itself. After mother died, five years ago, Gerald found that he had enough to live on comfortably. So he stopped practicing after a time. Three years ago he came to New York. I urged him to come. I don't think that

he ever cared for any place but New York, after living here for so many years. He is with me in the winter. It was very lonely for me here after I lost mother."

"Oh!" Edith Stanton flushed. "Is he in New York now?" she asked. "Doesn't he come here?" She detected the confusion in her friend's manner.

"Only now and then," Agnes replied. "You know he never liked the country."

"I hope he will come while I am here. I should like to see him again." Edith hesitated, looking straight into Agnes Davidson's face. "Is he happy?"

Agnes drew a deep breath. "I believe he still misses his work. It used to distract him even if it never interested him very much."

"What does he do with his time?"

"He reads a good deal. He keeps informed on all the new theories in medicine. Then he usually goes to the club."

"To the club?" Edith asked, surprised. "He didn't belong to clubs, I remember, when——"

"I know. He really isn't what they call a club man. He joined the University Club a year or two after he came here and I think he goes there merely to read the papers and to kill time."

"To kill time!" Edith whispered.

"He has a great deal of time, you know," Agnes remarked, with a sad little smile.

"Then he is very much bored?" Edith asked, and Agnes noticed how fine the deep black eyes were. Suffering had made them finer than they had ever been.

"I'm afraid so, dear, at times."

"Ah!" Edith turned her eyes away, letting her chin rest in one hand. "And is that why he is so unhappy?" she asked. "Is it merely that he is bored?"

For a long time Agnes did not speak. The two women sat together in silence.

"Forgive me, dear," said Edith, at last, "I ought not to have asked that." As Agnes continued to look distressed, Edith went on rapidly: "I had hoped to hear that he was happy. All those

years out in India, I longed for his happiness. If you had written me that he had married some one—some one worthy of him—oh, I think I should have cried for joy." The tears started from her eyes, and she brushed them away with one hand. "You see, dear, my conscience has troubled me a good deal."

"You were not to blame, Edith," said Agnes. "I have always said that."

"But has Clara forgiven me? She told me what she thought, you know, the day after our engagement was broken. She came to my house. I remember every word she said. I've heard her say it over and over again since, hundreds of times. She told me that I was heartless and that I would drive Gerald—that I would drive him——"

She stopped, covering her lips with her handkerchief. "She said I'd be punished. Oh, if I did wrong, she was right about that."

Agnes said nothing. She had heard Clara brag about that "dressing-down."

"Tell me, dear," Edith Stanton went on, controlling herself, "do you know what has become—what has become of that woman?"

Agnes grew pale. "She's in New York now," she said.

"In New York," Edith Stanton repeated in a deep whisper.

"Yes."

"And does he—does he see her?"

"She came with him," Agnes replied.

"Oh!" Edith sank back and covered her face with her hands. For a long time she sat motionless. At last she let her hands sink into her lap. "Did he go straight back to her?" she said, looking at Agnes with feverish eyes.

"Clara says so. She knows more about it than I do. Her husband told her."

As if by tacit agreement, they avoided speaking of Gerald again. They saw few people; after the hot days they went out in the early evening, when the air had freshened. They talked chiefly about the old life at school and about Edith's experience in India. Edith said she looked back on the eight years out

there as if they had been passed in a prison. She had suffered both from the climate and from the dissipation and neglect of her husband. After the first winter she had been tempted to leave him; but her pride had prevented her. Then she hoped that in time he would change. She had now decided that she should never live out of her own country again; already, after her few days in Riverdale, she felt so much better and so much younger.

"Eight years," she repeated with a sigh. Then she asked: "Is Nyack so far away that Clara can't come over to see me?"

IV.

The question prompted Agnes to write to her sister, and a few days later Clara Brewer appeared, wearing a manner of conscious righteousness. On meeting Edith her face did not relax. "I am glad to see you again," she said, carefully refraining from showing warmth as she took the hand timidly extended. "I hope you are very well."

"I'm very much better," Edith nervously replied. "I needn't ask how you are."

"Oh, I'm always well," said Clara with an air that proclaimed the salutary effects of a blameless life. They discussed the impersonal topics of slight acquaintance. Clara Brewer, who addressed Edith as "Mrs. Stanton," seemed determined to make it plain that by driving from Nyack while the temperature stood at 90 degrees, she had performed an arduous duty. At the first convenient opportunity, Agnes slipped out of the room.

"Clara," said Edith, after the painful silence following the realization that they were alone together, "I have something to say to you?"

"Well?" In the hall, Mrs. Brewer's sister could hear the familiar tone of resentment.

"The last time we met we said some hard things to each other."

"I said the hard things," Clara corrected. She prided herself on being just.

"Well, perhaps I made you. At any

rate, I can't bear to have you think bitterly of me."

Clara Brewer slightly raised her shoulders and covered one hand with the other on her lap. Her face assumed an expression of determined placidity. "I feel no bitterness."

"Thank you." Edith stopped. Clara's righteous manner made it hard for her to go on. At last she began again: "I didn't understand, then, what I was doing. I was pretty young, you know," she said delicately, as if afraid of referring even by indirection to the seven years that marked the difference between Clara Brewer's age and her own.

"You were twenty-seven," Clara maintained shortly, with the air of conveying information. "That's not considered so very young—for an unmarried woman."

"I knew nothing of the world," Edith went on with a beautiful dignity. "I was severe in my judgments of other people—as girls so often are."

"Yet he told you everything of his own accord," said Clara unflinchingly.

"I know. I understood afterward how fine that was!"

"Of course," Mrs. Brewer admitted, with a generosity that strengthened her position, "he ought to have told you long before. He ought to have told you when he asked you to marry him."

"I could have borne it better then. I think I could have forgiven him. I think so; but I can't be sure. At any rate, I should have had time to—understand my own feelings." Edith observed the questioning look that appeared in Clara's eyes. "I mean that when it came like that, at the last moment, just as we were about to be married, it shocked me—it frightened me."

"You must have been easily frightened, and you must have had queer notions of men. To expect them to be saints!" Clara concluded scornfully.

"I couldn't have married him then. I had to choose. It was marriage—or—"

"Or throwing him over."

"If he hadn't spoken so late!" Edith repeated helplessly. "That was what I couldn't—"

"Oh, I see. You thought he had played a trick on you by waiting so long. Would you have preferred that he should keep silent altogether? That's what most men would have done."

"No, I never thought of that. I see now that at first he wished to spare me. Toward the end his conscience made him speak."

"His conscience!" Clara bitterly echoed, with a sudden change of attitude. "I wish that his conscience troubled him a little oftener. It hasn't kept him from carrying on with that woman. Oh, it makes my blood boil to think that all these years we should have had such a shameful thing in our family. It was bad enough when my children were young; but now that my boys are growing up and meeting temptations of their own! Of course, they know about it already. Everybody knows. They see him driving with her in the Park, on the Riverside Drive, everywhere. She's shameless! And so is he, for that matter. I've met them together dozens of times, and I've seen my brother, my own brother, turn his head away as our carriages crossed, because he couldn't bow to me while he was with her. Oh!"

Mrs. Brewer passed her hand across her forehead and over her glossy black hair. "We hoped he'd get away from her when he came here from Albany. But she followed him. Those people always love New York. He'd ruined his practice in Albany and, of course, she made it impossible for him to start over again here. Agnes pretends that he never cared for his practice. But he loved it—he loved it. He might have become eminent. To think that he should spend his life tagging after her. At theatres, I've seen them, time and time again. She has a craze for theatre-going. It's her society, I suppose. It's her only chance of getting near people, decent people. Just to look at her is enough. And her clothes!" Mrs. Brewer laughed scornfully. "Heaven knows where she has them made."

• Edith Stanton looked helplessly at

Agnes Davidson's sister. She had always been afraid of Clara Brewer; now she felt subdued. Her face had become faintly flushed; her lips twitched.

"Oh, there's no hope for him," Clara went on with a despairing glance. For the moment Edith Stanton felt eliminated from the discussion. In the excitement of the narrative, Mrs. Brewer had ceased to censure her by word or manner. "I gave him up long ago. I pleaded with him. Mother pleaded. It killed mother, though in the last few months she never spoke of it. She loved him so. She cared more for him than for all the rest of us. It's always that way. The most troublesome, the most unworthy, gets the most affection. She left him twice as much as she left Agnes and me put together. I suppose she was afraid if she cut him off he'd do something desperate, kill himself or something like that. So she really left that money to that woman. And I tell you, she's spending it for him. He spends hardly a cent on himself. That's the way in cases like that—the people who do wrong make accomplices of the innocent. He made mother his accomplice. I told him so the day she was put in her coffin. I never saw a man look as he did."

"You might have spared him that," said Edith, gently.

"He might have spared *us*!" Clara exclaimed indignantly. "I don't see why you should have raked all this up, Edith Stanton," she complained, in her agitation forgetting the attitude of dignity she had assumed. "I haven't thought of it in this way for months."

"I'm sorry, Clara."

"Oh, well!" Mrs. Brewer gazed into her handkerchief. Her manner softened. "I think it's best for us not to speak of it—if we can help it. After mother was buried, he told me that if I ever mentioned it again he'd never have anything more to do with me. So I've kept quiet to have peace in the family. You see, it's hopeless."

"I can't see that, Clara."

Mrs. Brewer impatiently turned her head to one side. "If he'd only married that time," she lamented. "He'd broken

with her for good and all. He had *broken* with her. He'd bought her off. She never would have troubled him. She'd given him up, actually given him up—I know it. He told my husband so."

"Perhaps he would give her up again?"

"Yes. It's likely!"

"Perhaps, perhaps, I could persuade him."

"You!" Clara looked mystified.

"He cared for me enough to——" Edith Stanton waited till she could control herself. "I know he cared for me—and he may care still."

"And you'd marry him now—after what you know!" Clara exclaimed, horror-stricken.

"Yes, I'd marry him."

"Well!" Clara Brewer rolled her eyes.

"I've never ceased to care. It may be that he hasn't," Edith Stanton remarked, as if to reassure herself. As Clara continued dramatically to display amazement, she continued: "When I married I hoped I should stop caring. I hoped I should care for my husband. He knew how I felt. I told him everything when he asked me to marry him. If he had been different, I think I should have changed—in my feelings, I mean. But I soon saw that he cared less for me than for——"

"Some other woman?" Clara asked breathlessly, and Edith Stanton smiled.

"No. He had always been what they call a drinking man. After we went out to India, I suppose the climate made him worse."

V.

Before driving back to Nyack, Mrs. Brewer had no chance to discuss with her sister Edith Stanton's change of attitude toward their brother. That night, however, she sent back to Riverdale an hysterical letter, which somewhat bewildered Agnes Davidson. For the present, Agnes plainly saw that nothing could be done; so far as she knew Gerald had no intention of coming to

Riverdale before the close of the summer. When she next met her sister alone, Edith Stanton had gone for a reunion with relatives at Bar Harbor. Clara felt no delicacy in introducing at once the subject uppermost in her mind.

"Do you suppose she got me over here for the purpose of making that extraordinary proposal?" she asked.

"What proposal?" said Agnes, who appreciated her sister's freedom of translation and interpretation.

"Why, she practically told me that if Gerald were willing she'd marry him to-morrow."

"She thinks she owes it to him," said Agnes. "She has grown even more religious since she left this country. But her reason for wishing to see you was simply to make up with you. She believed that you blamed her and—and hated her."

"I see," said Clara, sarcastically. "And as she was going to live in New York again, she didn't want to have me for an enemy. I've often observed that those religious people are extremely clever. Well, it would be a comfort if Gerald would marry *somebody*," she conceded.

"It would be a mercy," her sister echoed.

"But I don't see what's to be done about it. He never goes anywhere. How are they to meet? She can't fling herself at his head. Perhaps if they meet unexpectedly in New York some day, she may not be so very keen about seeing him," said Clara, grimly. "One sight of that creature might cure her of some of her heroic notions."

"I don't think she wishes to be heroic. She hardly mentioned Gerald after the day you called here; she seemed to wish not to speak of him. If you hadn't written me as you did I might have thought she never cared to see him again. From the little she said I gathered that she had a feeling—it may be the merest fancy of mine—well, a feeling that she was in some way bound by the old promise."

"The promise that she broke eight years ago!" Clara gasped.

"I can understand how she would reason it out. She broke the promise when she was too young to realize that she ought to have been bound by it. She gave him up when he needed her most, when she might have had the privilege of doing something fine for his sake—forgiving him and helping him to lead a different life. She would consider it a privilege now. I remember—she once used the word," Agnes concluded rather lamely.

Clara Brewer resented this romantic interpretation of a situation, which to her view was utterly prosaic. It angered her that a proud, willful and unsympathetic woman should set herself up as a martyr. "How does she know he would have been faithful? He might have gone back to that woman anyway."

"Clara!" her sister protested.

"Oh, well, have your own way about it. If she can get him away from *her*, she's welcome."

"I'm afraid she'll never get him," Agnes said, despairingly.

Mrs. Brewer's eyes grew abstracted. "Can't you have her at your house next winter?"

"I'd have to tell him she was coming. Then he'd encourage me to have her—he never opposes me in anything—and he'd stay away till she left, just as he did here."

"Well, perhaps something will bring them together," said Clara with the sigh of the practical woman driven to relying on chance.

Late in August Gerald appeared in Riverdale. He greeted his sister affectionately, explaining simply that he had been down in Maine. When she spoke of Edith Stanton he showed an amiable interest. "How is she looking?" he said, and as she replied she noticed that he seemed hardly to listen. "I had a note from her the other day," Agnes went on. "She's to stay at Bar Harbor until September. Then she's to go to Lenox to be with the Thursbons. She's taken a furnished apartment for the winter in New York—at the Burrage flats, near the Park."

He lifted his eyebrows. "That will be pleasant for you," he said.

"Perhaps you'll come with me and call on her sometime," she ventured to say, and he replied:

"Why, yes, if you like."

When Agnes returned to town in the early autumn, her brother was making one of his mysterious absences. A few days later, just as Edith Stanton was saying good-bye to his sister in the hall, he drove up to the house. She had ceased wearing black, and in her tight-fitting gray walking-suit, her pretty hat, trimmed with small blue flowers, she looked wonderfully young. He held out his hand and smiled into her face.

"Well, Edith," he said, "I can't see that you are changed much," and he noticed the flush that further beautified her.

"It's very nice to see you here," she said.

Gerald kissed his sister, and he glanced at the guest again. "You aren't leaving, are you, just as I've come?"

"Yes, I have an engagement for dinner," she said, perfectly composed now, "and I must run."

He opened the door for her and as she passed out she turned to thank him with one of those radiant smiles that he associated with her girlhood. As he closed the heavy door, he started up the stairs without speaking. Then, apparently thinking he had been uncivil to his sister, he spoke down to her over the baluster:

"Dinner at seven, Agnes?"

"Yes. I'm so glad you've come, dear. I've missed you."

During the meal Agnes did not once speak of Edith Stanton. But one morning a week later, as Gerald was about to leave the house, she said: "Will you go to Edith's with me this afternoon?"

Something in the expression of his face convinced her that he had been anticipating this question. "Why, yes," he replied, lowering his head, after a habit she had noticed of late. Then he looked into her face. "Four o'clock?"

She nodded and turned quickly away, as if she feared her glance betrayed guilt. But when she walked up Fifth

Avenue with him, it seemed natural that they should both be on their way to see her old friend. She indulged herself in the illusion that they had gone back a dozen years, before there had been any engagement. She recalled Gerald's first meeting with Edith, under circumstances so similar that the coincidence seemed a hopeful prophecy. Edith had been staying at a hotel in Fifth Avenue, too, near the place where she now lived. When they arrived in the apartment, they found Edith there with two other callers, both strangers to New York. So the talk became at once impersonal. The strangers stayed persistently, and Agnes after telegraphic communication with her hostess, expressive of regret, rose while the travelers were still eloquent with description.

"We want you to come for dinner on Thursday," she said, with the realization that she had never trapped her brother so shamelessly before, and Gerald civilly echoed the invitation. When Edith Stanton had promised to write that evening if she should be free and they had taken themselves off, Agnes prepared herself for a mild rebuke. Gerald said nothing, however. He accepted the situation with a passivity that seemed to her far more severe than any rebuke could have been.

VI.

In the note that reached Agnes Davidson the next morning, Edith Stanton accompanied her acceptance of the invitation to dinner with a mild scolding. "You may tell poor Gerald, if you like, that I shan't feel in the least hurt if he is called out of town on Thursday afternoon." Agnes ignored this injunction, however, and replied to the note with the request that Edith come early so that they might have a talk without interruption. To Edith Stanton this message was equivalent to saying: "Don't drive down, because I am determined that Gerald shall have no excuse for not taking you home," and she obeyed by walking along Fifth Avenue in the exhilarating atmosphere of the late November day.

At the table that night Gerald David-

son plainly exerted himself. Agnes thought that she had never seen him appear so well. As a very young man he had had fits of wild gayety; this evening he showed all of his old humor, tempered with reserve and dignity. He made the two women talk, too, drawing Edith out with questions about her life in India. After the meal, as he remained in the dining-room with his coffee and cognac and his cigar, Agnes remarked:

"You've put new life into him, dear-est. I had begun to think that the old Gerald was lost."

It was hardly later than half-past nine when Edith said good-night. She went upstairs to get her wraps and on her return she found Gerald in his heavy overcoat waiting for her. As they started down the steps, the moon was shining through the bare boughs of the trees, which stood out distinct in the cold air. "You won't mind walking, will you?" she said, taking his arm, and they moved rapidly up the street into Fifth Avenue. He grew silent, as if suddenly embarrassed at being alone with her. On reaching the apartment-house, he would have left her at the elevator, but she urged him to come up. "Just for a few moments," she said, in a tone that made it impossible for him to refuse.

In her little over-heated drawing-room she made him take off his coat and sit in her big chair near the window. All nervousness had disappeared from her manner. She acted as if she were following out a plan. When he had arranged herself comfortably, she sat on a chair in front of him; letting her left hand rest on the little table beside her. "Now," she said.

He looked at her, trying to smile. The ease he had shown at dinner had given place to awkwardness. He seemed afraid of her. "Well?" he replied.

"It has taken us a long time to meet, hasn't it, *really* to meet?" she went on, letting her arm sink into her lap and clasping her hands.

"Do you think that we ought to have met?" he asked quietly.

She bowed, not daring to speak.

"Wouldn't it have been better—if we had left things just as they were?"

"Not for me," she whispered.

"For me then?"

She could not trust herself to look at him. For a few moments she kept her eyes fixed on her hands. Then she said: "Wouldn't you like to smoke?"

He smiled and shook his head, as if refusing to grant a concession. "Thank you."

She raised both hands to her forehead. "I have heard all about the life you've led since I went away," she broke out. "I can't bear it. It's too dreadful. I can't bear it," she repeated.

He watched her while she cried into her handkerchief. He said nothing. At last she stopped crying and she went on: "Why did you take me at my word that time? Why did you let me *immolate* myself?"

He looked astonished. "What do you mean, Edith?"

"You ought to have known that I didn't mean all I said. If you only hadn't been so yielding."

"Oh, my dear child," he replied, "that's my curse. I'm too yielding."

"But you ought to have seen that I was sacrificing myself. You ought not to have allowed me to do that."

"I never thought of that," he said, simply, "and I have never blamed you."

"But you went back to that woman. How could you?"

For a long time he hesitated. "How can we do a good many things?" he said. "I don't believe I know just why I went back. I suppose it seemed to me there was nothing else to do. I suppose I thought she cared. I knew she cared. I was unhappy and I was lonely."

"Oh!" she whispered, as if the explanation hurt her. She waited, thinking that he might go on. "If you knew how I have blamed myself."

"There was no reason, Edith," he remonstrated, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"And how I have wished to make it up to you."

"Ah!" he said deprecatingly, as if the talk tired him.

They had reached a point where she was at a loss. She had not intended to reproach him; she could not understand why she had reproached him. At the moment, it had seemed the nearest way of reaching him. But he was still far away; he did not even understand what she wished to lead to; she feared that she could never get near him; she could not make him understand. Her talk had been foolish, theatrical. At this moment, they were sitting together like strangers.

He was silent for a long time. "I'm in a strange position, Edith. I don't feel about things as I once did. It's as if I had become some one else, as if I didn't belong to myself any more. Do you see what I mean?"

Her eyes shone. "You surely don't belong to *her*," she said in a tone almost angry.

"I owe her something."

She was tempted to say, "Yes, you owe her your wasted life, the misery she has brought on innocent people," but she kept silent.

"I am responsible for her now. I've made myself responsible." He smiled bitterly. "I'm all she has. If I were to let her go now——" He hesitated.

"What would happen?" she asked in a low voice.

He looked into her face. "She would go straight to the gutter. She would drink. Within a year they'd find her body floating in the river or they'd shut her up in some asylum for inebriates. What peace of mind could I have while I knew that she was going down? Things are bad enough as they are without making them worse." He shook his head. "There's no getting out of it," he concluded, with a look in his eyes that showed her he had pursued this argument many times before. "There's no escape."

"There is always escape," she exclaimed, with the dauntless optimism of the feminine religious temperament. "There must be. It isn't possible that any one should have to go on leading such a life. It's too dreadful. And for a man like you, Gerald, a man like you!"

"A man like me," he repeated, sardonically. "Edith, I'm not worth worrying about."

He rose heavily, but she remained in her seat. She kept her eyes fixed on him.

"Don't imagine that I'm hardened, or that I don't appreciate how good you are," he said. "But I know how hopeless it is. It's not easy to explain a situation like that. It's something that grows, you know. It isn't," he went on, with a dreary smile, "that the situation in itself is so attractive. I'd give—well, I'd give a good many years of my life to be able to get out of it—without doing more harm, I mean. I saw long ago how degrading it was and how it was taking all the life and ambition out of me, and I knew, of course, how much it was costing other people—my family. I guess the ambition is all gone now and she owns what life I have left. A man has to pay for these things, Edith, and the best I can do is to pay like a man."

She rose and held out her hand. "Perhaps I ought not to have spoken," she said. "I think I did it as much for my own sake as yours, more. If I could *do* anything."

"You can't, Edith. No one can."

"I can at least be your friend, Gerald. You won't let that stand in the way, will you?"

"Oh, no," he remarked in a tone so cheerful that it gave her a feeling of despair. It convicted her of theatrical heroism; it made her feel as if she had been exploiting her superiority.

He turned and put on his coat, with a resistance of her help. "I don't go about much nowadays," he said, facing her again, hat in hand. "I'm a good deal of a recluse. I guess I'm getting old."

VII.

"Then they had it out," said Clara Brewer a few days later as soon as the maid had brought in the tea things and had disappeared.

"I think so," Agnes replied, "from what she said this morning. She didn't seem to want to talk about it."

Clara again rolled her head to one side, her lips parting slightly to breathe a sigh of despair. "Then that hope is shattered." A moment later she resumed: "Of course, he didn't say anything about it." Her tone expressed the resentment of the voluble woman against the masculine weapon of silence.

"I waited in the library till he came home. I don't know just why I did it. Perhaps I was afraid. Then I thought he might say something. You know he usually comes into the library to smoke at night, just before he goes up."

"Well?"

"He didn't come in, though I know he saw me. I saw his face under the light at the foot of the stairs. It was dreadful."

"H'm. What was there dreadful about it?" said Clara, who often took refuge from emotion in satirical resentment.

"I sat here quite breathless and I listened for a long time."

"What were you listening for, you goose?"

Agnes Davidson lifted the teapot and shook it. Then she poured a cup of tea, passing it to her sister. "You know what I've always been afraid of. You know I've always thought that thing made him terribly unhappy. When mother died—"

Mrs. Brewer had lifted the cup to her lips and taken a long sip of the tea. It evidently comforted her. "Agnes Davidson," she said, carefully placing the cup on the saucer, "I believe you are the most fanciful woman of your age I've ever known."

"He took mother's death terribly hard. You know that as well as I do. I think he blamed himself, and there was no one who could help him. I couldn't even speak to him about it."

"Perhaps *she* helped him," Clara sneered.

"And then seeing Edith as he did the other night, having that talk with her, it must have brought everything back. It was like going over his life again. If I had thought, if I had realized, I don't believe I should have had the courage to bring them together."

"Well, it doesn't seem to have done any good! How has he been since?"

"Just the same." After a moment of inward debate, Agnes added: "Edith thinks he doesn't want to see her any more. She doesn't like to come here. She says I must go to her."

"Oh, you're two of a kind, my dear, two of a kind," exclaimed Mrs. Brewer, waving her hand. "It seems to me things are just as badly off as they ever were. In my opinion, there's only one thing that will end it: death. And you may be sure *she* won't be the one to die first. That would be too much luck. Those women often live to a green old age."

Agnes Davidson recalled this speech three weeks later when she was summoned to the telephone. "It's Mrs. Brewer," said the maid. "She wants you to come as quick as you can. She seems a good deal excited."

As Agnes Davidson held the receiver at her ear, she heard her sister say: "Is that you, Agnes? Well, it took you a long time to get here. Something has happened. Arthur has just telephoned up from the office. I told him I'd tell you. He heard it by the merest accident. That woman is dead."

Agnes understood at once. For the past ten years "that woman" had conveyed to her a distinct meaning. Between the sisters the name of the woman was never mentioned. Agnes' first impulse was to utter a cry of thankfulness, but it seemed wicked. So she stood in silence, holding the receiver at her ear.

"Well, why don't you say something?" cried Clara Brewer in a voice that sounded hysterical.

Then Agnes Davidson made a remark that she afterward wondered at: "Poor Gerald!"

"Poor Gerald!" her sister echoed indignantly. "He ought to thank his lucky stars he's got rid of her. It's a blessed relief to all of us. Where is he?"

"He hasn't been here for three days. He told me he was going out of town. You know he often——"

"How did he look when he left?"

"Much as usual."

"H'm."

The silence that followed was broken by an alien voice: "Are you through?"

"Well, he must have gone to the funeral," Clara went on rapidly. "Those people have funerals, I presume. Good-by. I'll come in this afternoon. No. I'll come down to lunch. Or you might come up here. No. I guess I'd better go down. We couldn't talk before the children."

Their talk was devoted chiefly to considering what their brother would do now that he was a free man. He was forty-three years old, and old for his years. Besides giving up his practice, he had dropped away from his old friends. He had cut himself off even from some of the near relatives he had been fond of.

"Arthur and I were saying yesterday that he hadn't been at our house for nearly six months. And the children are so fond of him, too." As for his practice, Clara was far more optimistic than her sister. "I see no reason in the world why he shouldn't start in right here in New York. His age wouldn't count against him. Age is a good thing in a doctor—if he isn't too old. I wonder if he'll take up with Edith again," she concluded, introducing the subject which from a vague feeling of propriety they had both been avoiding.

"I think the best thing we can do is to let him alone," said Agnes, and her sister gave her a sharp look.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid. After that last scene with him I told him that I never would show the slightest interest in his doings again."

A week later Gerald Davidson returned home. He said nothing to Agnes of the cause of his absence; but she felt sure he knew that she was aware of the change in his life. He was gentle and considerate with her, but not more so than he had always been. The only difference was that he stayed at home more now and in the evening he sat with her oftener. When April came, he said that, for the summer, instead of staying in town or go-

ing to the seashore, he would go to Riverdale.

VIII.

When, late in April, Agnes Davidson proposed to her brother that she close the house earlier than they usually did, Gerald expressed his assent with an animation which conveyed a satisfaction to escape from town. In Riverdale he seemed far more cheerful than he had been for a long time. He busied himself about the place; he suggested improvements; he drew plans for more comfortable rooms for the servants; he supervised the gardening; he even worked in the garden an hour or two each day. He bought a saddle horse and nearly every morning he rode; occasionally, he drove with Agnes. From these signs of a growing interest in life, his sister took comfort and encouragement. Perhaps, after a few months in the country, he would return to town with a store of energy that would lead him back to his work.

Some of the Riverdale men he had known as a young fellow made advances to him; but he soon showed an indifference to their society. He and Agnes grew nearer; in the evening he often read aloud to her or they had long talks about the past. They talked about their mother now more than they had ever done since her death. He seemed to like to recall to Agnes events that had happened when they were both children. This fondness at first amused her; then it troubled her a little. It was like a premature expression of age.

One night, as they were sitting on the little porch that gave a distant glimpse of the river, Agnes mentioned that she had a letter from Edith Stanton. "She's with the Alfred Bentleys," she said. "They have a beautiful place at Bar Harbor; but I don't think she's very happy."

"No?" he said, indifferently. "Not enough going on?"

"I don't think it's that. She doesn't care for gayety now. She never did

much, even as a girl." It seemed odd to her that she should try to explain Edith to her brother. Then she reflected that she had known Edith several years before he met her. "Her brother's wife bores her. But she has been very restless and discontented since she came back to this country."

"It's a wonder she doesn't get married."

In the silence that followed this speech Agnes could feel her heart beat.

"I don't think she will ever marry," she heard herself say, and she repented her dishonesty. She knew she had spoken in order to draw her brother out.

"She's very attractive still," he said, as if speaking of a woman he had merely met or had seen from a distance.

His remark made it easier for Agnes to say what she had not dared to say before. "I believe that she cares for you still, Gerald. I believe that is why she is so discontented."

He sighed heavily and leaned back in his seat, fanning himself with his Panama hat. "I think I should make a failure as a husband, as her husband. Yes, as any one's husband. I'm too old to enter into that sort of relation."

"Forty-four, Gerald. That isn't old for a man."

"It's old for me, dear. Sometimes I feel—well, a hundred. I haven't any spirit left for new ventures."

"You might have had such a career," she said, softly.

He passed his fingers over his mustache and looked out toward the river.

"You could have it now if you liked," she went on in the same tone, not daring to glance at him.

He shook his head, as if conversing with some one far away. "It's too late. I have no initiative."

They sat together, listening to the hum of the insects. The foliage seemed tropical. Hardly a breath of air was stirring. From the valley a white cloud rose almost imperceptibly.

"Don't you think we'd better go in, Gerald? It's getting a little damp."

"All right," he said, rising slowly. "You go. I'll take the chairs in."

FOR TWO OR FOR FOUR

By James Forbes

"EVELYN!"

"This is a surprise!"

"Craig!"

"This is a pleasure."

"It seems a century since I saw you."

"Does it really? It is hardly a decade."

"You don't look a day older."

"If I did I should give my maid her notice. Do you know that you are holding both my hands? It's awfully dear of you to be so glad, and of course everything 'goes' at a studio tea. But every one is staring so."

"New Yorkers always were appreciative."

"Don't be silly. They are not gazing at me. I am such a very old story. You are the magnet, Mr. Moneybags."

"Horrible! Won't you help me to escape? Are all the corners occupied?"

"Yes, and there is a large waiting-list. Besides you are a somebody now. Oh, yes, you are. Everybody is talking about you. I have heard ever so many people call you a self-made man, whatever that is. Did you really work? It's perfectly wonderful. I must hear all about it. No, we will remain here. I don't mind having them know that I am great chums with the newest object of interest. Incidentally, my dearest woman friend is dying to replace me. How do you do, Alys. Charming tea, indeed. I do so want to chat with you, Alys, dear—later. I ask you, Craig, did you ever see a more patent bid for an introduction?"

"And once upon a time she refused to meet me. Money does make a difference."

"Make a difference! My dear Craig, you have been born again."

"Isn't this the shrine of art?"

"Art? South Africa has transformed you into a simple child of nature. This crowd would rather see a photograph of your bank account than the finest picture Cardoni could paint."

"And Cardoni's the fashion!"

"Yes, he paints our 'souls.' You must have him do yours. You are hopelessly out of it unless you have a soul done à la Cardoni."

"Evelyn, you have grown very cynical."

"I am ten years older. Cardoni says I have a very romantic nature."

"It's a recent development. You were very practical ten years ago."

"Why should you cavil? Had I been less so you would not have been Mr. Cræsus of South Africa. At Tom Cushing's dinner last night, Alys said you were rich enough to have your photograph in the paper—two columns across—quite as often as those chorus creatures. But Tom remarked that the papers were not 'onto you yet.'"

"To be 'copy' is usually the penalty of being 'Cræsus.'"

"How did you ever escape?"

"They don't bother the smaller fry."

"Oh! You are so tryingly modest. Why not give your friends the satisfaction of bragging about you, and saying 'I told you so.' We have not even been allowed the opportunity of patting you on the back. Tom Cushing says you arrived two weeks ago. I have a lovely disposition or I shouldn't be at all nice to you. What brings you here, of all places?"

"Cardoni."

"Oh, come now, men don't come here to see Cardoni."

"They come to see his 'souls.'"

"No, their outer wrappings."

"And the women?"

"Some come to play the game, others to look on."

"What are the stakes? Matrimony?"

"Heavens, no—you are positively backwoodsy."

"You've looked on long enough, Evelyn, and I don't care to play. Suppose we leave."

"But Cardoni! He will be furious with me if I remove the largest lion from the menagerie—and a possible customer."

"We are old friends. I knew Cardoni when he designed cigar labels. He seems to be combining business with pleasure over there in the corner. My little affair can wait."

"But you have not said 'How-do-you-do' to another soul."

"The spirit does not move me."

"It's a terrible temptation. I can't resist it. Alys won't speak to me for days. Come along. Did you hear that? It was the first rip in my reputation."

"There is no cause for alarm. Money has made me intensely moral."

"How are we to know that?"

"Is this your auto, Evelyn?"

"Yes."

"Where are we going?"

"Age cannot wither, nor custom stale the infinite variety of your impudence. Where are you going?"

"With you."

"Oh, are you? Do they take everything for granted in South Africa?"

"You are not a bit your old hospitable self, Evelyn. Here am I, a stranger within your gates—"

"I have always been taught to avoid strangers. But you have a nice honest face. And Alys has joined those Blight girls at the window. So you may come. Where shall I drop you?"

"Claremont."

"Claremont! My dear man, do you know that it is five o'clock?"

"An eminently respectable hour—in the afternoon. I thought you wanted 'to hear all about it.'"

"Incorrigible! Jump in. They'll declare I am trying to abduct you. No, you sit on this side. What use has a

man for a mirror. Craig, why didn't you tell me that my—"

"Golden hair was hanging down your back? Because I was too much interested in the naughty little twinkle in your eye."

"Is there? I can't see it."

"Their beauty dazzles you."

"You'll turn my head, and I'll lose all my hairpins. Hold my gloves, Craig! Some one might see you —"

"I don't care. I haven't kissed those finger tips since—hello? What are you doing with a plain gold ring?"

"Wearing it, goose."

"Where did you get it?"

"An old gentleman in a white and black gown gave it to a man of my acquaintance, and simply insisted that he put it on my finger. One couldn't disregard the wishes of such a venerable old dear, especially when a hundred or more people had been invited to witness the presentation. It would have seemed so lacking in respect."

"You're married. Who to?"

"To whom, if you don't mind, Craig."

"Do I know him?"

"No. If you did you would have known that we were married."

"Why?"

"Because even casual acquaintances are forced to listen to a catalogue of my charms and virtues."

"Is he my style of man?"

"What is your style of man, Craig?"

"Oh—brainy rather than—"

"You self-complacent creature!"

"Now, you know what I mean—my—my sort of temperament."

"Not the least little bit."

"That is strange."

"Why? Do you think yours is the only satisfying temperament?"

"You used to say you loved me."

"I did."

"Did what? Did say, or did love?"

"Craig, are you a Scotch Presbyterian?"

"What?"

"Your conversation recalls the Shorter Catechism."

"Did love? What made you change the tense, Evelyn?"

"Elliott Egerton Winthrop."

"He must be a wonderfully attractive fellow—mentally!"

"Mentally?"

"The power of mind over matter!"

"What are you talking about?"

"Only expressing in a delicate manner my regret that he is—homely?"

"Homely?"

"You gave me to understand that he was not my type."

"I should say not. He's simply stunning—"

"Oh, thank you. Spare me, spare me, Mrs. Adonis-Hercules."

"Stop chaffing me and tell if in your travels you have ever seen anything prettier than the Hudson and Claremont."

"Ever bring Elliott Egerton up here?"

"No."

"Too many memories?"

"We have our own haunts."

"Oh!"

"I wonder if there is anybody in our old corner?"

"Let us get out and see."

"I have not been here in ages."

"Well, allow me to introduce you to the view."

"I get a sufficient idea of it from here. Tell Bowen to wait."

"Not a soul in the place. I'm playing in great luck to-day."

"It's so little changed. This might be the same table."

"I'll swear it's the same waiter. You'll join me in a Scotch highball?"

"I have not tasted whisky—oh, in years—not since that winter we all went skating—"

"And drank hot Scotches? Elliott Egerton doesn't like it?"

"Yes, he does. But he doesn't like me to like it."

"I have gotten out of the way of it, too. Margaret doesn't touch it, and I always feel so sort of stingy drinking alone. Two high balls—Scotch—yes, of course. Tall glasses."

"Who is Margaret?"

"Margaret Cecil Chetwynd Schuyler."

"Who?"

"My wife."

"Your wife!"

"Well, you might be polite and ask about her. Turn about is fair play."

"It's unnecessary. I know exactly. Blonde—high color—stately carriage—low voice—very old family—doesn't 'fawncy' America—and all that sort of thing."

"You have seen her."

"No."

"You have mutual friends."

"No."

"But I say, that is her to the life."

"Of course, she is English."

"But how did you guess it?"

"No guesswork about it, Craig. You were married in South Africa. I would not do you the injustice to suppose you had married a Boer. If she had been an American girl, we would have known."

"Here's to you, Evelyn. You always were clever."

"To Mrs. Craig!"

"You got ahead of me. To Elliott—Here, we'll have a fresh round. We can't pledge him in the dregs."

"Wait, we have a use for the lees. To the Celibates!"

"The Celibates!"

"The Celibates!"

"Odd, isn't it? We were never going to marry."

"Because, you could only provide—"

"Matinée tickets and roses."

"Oh, Craig, I did love those roses."

"And a few of the actors."

"Never."

"What's the joke?"

"It's so funny. Here we are, two sober—"

"That can be remedied."

"—sober married folks. Your marriage will be such a surprise to the old crowd."

"Here's to the Old Crowd!"

"The Old Crowd!"

"Who else is married?"

"You mean remarried. I think that they have all been divorced at least once. I never had a head for figures nor a memory for surnames. Your safest

plan would be to call all the women you know by their Christian prefixes."

"Don't bother. After all, you are the only one I want to know about."

"Are you making love to me?"

"You should know. I think you studied my different varieties."

"Scientific research merely, Mr. Schuyler. I was interested in the *study* of the *species*."

"I recall other species."

"Goose. I could not be obvious."

"Oh, I see."

"You didn't then, simpleton. You were frightfully jealous."

"I remember. It was Tom Cushing."

"What became of the ring?"

"I pawned it."

"Oh, Craig, were you—poor?"

"Dead broke, often."

"I was unhappy for ever so long. Soon after I went to England on a visit to the Livingstons—you remember Elsie and Jack?"

"Rather; we stood up with them."

"When it became known that you had gone to South Africa, Elsie wrote, asking me to come to her."

"She suspected?"

"I never knew—she was very kind."

"Elsie always was a good sort."

"Then father died—"

"I am very sorry. I had not heard."

"Jack came over with me, and then insisted on my return to them. Five years ago I came back to New York with Mr. Winthrop. And you?"

"It was many a long day before New York spelled anything beyond this corner and you in—"

"In a red dress?"

"It is not nice of you, Evelyn, to rake up my criticisms of you."

"How horrid you were about it?"

"What, the gown or Tom Cushing?"

"Both."

"Well, neither of them suited you."

"Made me seem a little ambiguous as to morals?"

"You were becoming conspicuous. Men talked about you. I could not stand by and see you adopt the standards of the faster element in the Old Crowd without a protest."

"It was too vigorous a one, and it was

unjust. My only reason for being pals with Tom was to prevent our friends' discovery of the real state of affairs."

"Why didn't you say so?"

"I was furious, outraged at your doubt of me after—"

"That kiss!"

"After I had given you my word."

"That kiss of betrothal! Sweet-heart! Evelyn, dear heart, we may not see each other again for an age. Why not dine with me here to-night? Since I have won a few dollars in this money game, let me have the happiness of giving you one of those little dinners I always longed to buy for you. And let us remember only that we loved each other once. Kiss me, Eve. No one will see you—just for auld lang syne."

"Don't look at me like that. Remember where we are. Sit down, Craig—please—stop. You are crushing my hands—the rings are cutting my flesh—Elliott's ring—oh, Craig—I have almost been a fool."

"And I have been a blackguard. Forgive me."

"I am equally at fault. We women love to court the dangers of 'once upon a time.' Craig, suppose we make that a dinner for four?"

"Can you get Winthrop?"

"We have nothing on for to-night."

"Sherry's? Seven-thirty. Good! Waiter, check. That's all right."

"The auto is at the door? Come, Evelyn."

"Where can I put you down?"

"Sherry's. This is a very special occasion. I won't trust the arrangements to any one."

"Stop there, Bowen, then home. Now, tell me all about it—especially Margaret."

* * * * *

"Hello! Is this the Holland? I want to speak to Mrs. Schuyler. Yes, yes, w-a-i-t-i-n-g. Is that you, Margaret? Do you care especially about the theatre to-night? Not if I care to do something else? Quite a proper wifely spirit—still, I appreciate your consider-

ation. I have asked some people to dine with us. No, you don't know them. Mr. and Mrs. Winthrop. Mrs. Winthrop is a very old friend of mine, and is anxious to know you. I met her to-day—accidentally. No, you have never heard me speak of her. What will you wear? You always look well. Just like a man? Well, you do! What do I especially like you in? I think you're simply ripping in that red—no, no—the bright red, with the white things at the neck. Yes, that's the one.

Oh, I know I'm a prize idiot when it comes to describing a dress. But, my darling girl, it's costing me by the word to learn now. Margaret, are you listening? Keep out, Central. You're a brick, and I adore you. What? You didn't say anything? Why didn't you? Afraid it would cost something? I'll pay the freight. There, that's much better. Thank you kindly. When will I be home? In half an hour. By the way, we dine at seven-thirty. Good-by."



THE BANKER'S LOVE STORY

By Lincoln Steffens

LIKE a rock in the sea, the Burdette National Bank rises, cold, quiet and imposing, out of the fierce tides of Wall Street. No currents move this splendid institution. When all is calm in the financial world, the Burdette expresses serene confidence; when the storm breaks, the aspect of the bank is still that of repose, the placid dignity of immutable power. In periods of dread panic, brokers find it comforting to pass the bank and contemplate its strength and the magnitude of its resources. Within its liberal dimensions, the roys of busy, silent clerks, the cavernous vaults back of high, fence-like railings, the impressive stillness, make you lower your voice in respect and sober humility before the millions of money, the billions of credit, the greatness of the men who are back of the Burdette.

The one disturbing element in the general prospect of peaceful power is the president, Francis P. Jewett, a querulous, fretful, little old man, whom men curse, envy and bow before, as an autocrat. "Yes," "no," he snaps, and your scheme goes or fails. Up and down he paces, irregularly always, listening to half your proposal, then, deciding in a flash, he drives you away,

shoving—perhaps pushing you out of the door.

Frank Jewett hates you. He is a failure and he hates and blames everybody, excepting only himself, but most of all he hates and blames Chester Frewan, a director of the Burdette, who made him. Since all the world besides rather likes Chester Frewan, it is supposed that Jewett's detestation of him is but the manifestation in a mean mind of an everlasting sense of his obligation. This looks too much like the explanation simple human nature finds in its own heart for the eccentricities of others.

Frewan represents to Jewett a system he deplors. Jewett is not an autocrat, he is not even the head of his own bank. Wall Street has its bosses, just as politics has, and few bank presidents are masters of their own banks. The Burdette National is one of the Van Vliet banks, and Frewan is their chief representative in the board, just as he is on the boards of others of their banks, trust companies and railroads. All day long he goes about from one board meeting to another, contented, courteous, with a story here, a kind word there, a helping hand for one man and

a ready laugh for another. Though he knows little of finance or railroading, he usually decides all the larger questions discussed by his expert colleagues, and since they know for whom he speaks, his authority is never challenged. Sometimes these bigger men grumble or jest among themselves at his expense, but he has dignity, tact, riches, and the world accepts him at his face value.

Ambitious for real power, tormented by a sense of ability balked, Frank Jewett is not willingly loyal to the men who control the system and is not wholly trusted by them. His force of character and his knowledge of banking make him a troublesome necessity, where Frewan is a petted luxury. Frewan is the companion of his principals and their check upon Jewett.

"No," said Jewett one day, when his cashier had presented a proposition for a loan.

"But——" the cashier hesitated.

"No, no, no!" cried the president, springing to his feet. "I say no!"

"Mr. Frewan——"

"Stop!" screamed Jewett, dancing up to his humble subordinate. "Don't mention that name to me. That court fool! That taker of tips! Go!"

And the gray little president seized the gray little cashier by the shoulders and pushed him out of the room. Then he paced the floor, his face slowly calming, till by and by Mr. Frewan came in smiling, well kept, easy. He set his tall hat on the desk, opened his long frock coat, stroked his white side whiskers contentedly.

"Frank," he said, "let 'em have it."

"What? Who?"

Mr. Frewan sank comfortably into Jewett's great chair, crossed one pearl-trouser leg over the other and dangled his glittering boots with their white spats.

"Oh, that gas pool; let them have the money."

"What! with all that dry-rotted collateral? No! no! There's no banking in that."

"Banking, no; but business."

"Business, eh. It's politics, I'll warrant you. It's just dirty politics."

"Banking, business, politics—they're all the same thing, Frank."

Jewett looked over his sleek director, and though his hands twitched, he said: "All right, I'll let 'em take the whole bank, but I don't see what you people want to keep a banker in your bank for."

Frewan laughed and got up. As he picked up his hat he said, seriously:

"Frank, I owe you an apology. I should have spoken of this to you yesterday. It had been all arranged to let this pool have the money, and I forgot to tell you about it. Forgive me, old fellow."

"All right, all right," said Jewett, impatiently, as he led to the door the hand Frewan laid in his.

"I'm sincerely sorry," Frewan added, kindly.

"It's all right, all right, all right," said Jewett, hastening the departure.

When the door swung shut, he sprang to the bell, banged it, and to the deprecating cashier cried:

"You were right, that loan goes. Never mind the securities. Throw in the bank. And remember, I'm the cashier of this bank; you're only assistant cashier or loan clerk. Mr. Chester Frewan's flowing whiskers are the president. Git out."

That night Jewett was in bad humor, and his son and daughter noticing it, carried on at the table a long dispute in nods and gestures. It was a big night at the opera and neither of them wanted to go. Mr. Frewan had told Jewett early in his career as a president, that it was necessary for a man in his position to show himself pretty frequently at such places. Jewett cursed him, but hired a box on alternate nights. At first he went faithfully, but he noticed that Frewan seldom appeared himself; Mrs. Frewan represented him. After that Mrs. Jewett had to attend to the opera and all that sort of thing. When, in the course of the years, Mrs. Frewan and Mrs. Jewett died, the Frewan and Jewett children represented the families. But if no one else would go, Jewett went himself. Whatever was part of his work, he did conscientiously.

This night Miss Jewett and young

Mr. Jewett both had other things that were more human than music, and their nods meant plainly: "You tell him." "No, I won't." "All right, nobody will, then." "But you must." "Not on your life." "Do it, I shan't." "Oh, yes, you will."

The butler understood; he described the whole debate afterward, below stairs.

"And Miss Nellie, she give in to him, the way she always does. He's a coward, young Mr. 'Enry is, as I would be. You ought to a 'eard Mr. Jewett. 'Papa, says Miss Nellie, after the coffee. 'Pop,' says she, goin' up to 'm sweet an' lovin', 'it's your turn to do the opera. Pop, 'Enry, he won't and I can't.' Wow. Pop, he fell like an armful of dishes. Such a how-de-do, as you Americans says. 'That's just what he needs,' he says, 'to fix him. Music!' He yelled it. 'Music,' says 'e, 'to 'armonize his soul and put him at peace with the world.' But 'Enry he run away and Miss Nellie she runs, too, and Mr. Jewett 'e's gone to the opera."

In such a mood Mr. Jewett slammed into his box, and, blaming Frewan, it was some comfort to see his chief friend and chief enemy, also abandoned by his children, alone in his box. The opera was all song without words to him; he glanced at Frewan, thinking of the tip-taker's hideous sacrifices to rise; how he made his million or so toady to the many millions; gave up all his opinions to be always on the right side, either in politics or finance; put out false reports to help stock deals, denied true reports at his owner's request; and was so unconsciously despised that Mr. Van Vliet had often asked him to announce the truth a week after making him deny it.

"And he did it," Jewett muttered. "I'm low enough; I'm a low-down clerk, but they don't ask me to play the fool and dangle my bells in public. And the public don't see the fool, and the fool dances, denies, affirms and smirks. Look at him smile! Look at him bow to this side and to that. Hello, there he goes. Now what's he up to?"

The curtain fell, and Jewett saw Fre-

wan leave his box to reappear in that of Mrs. Van Vliet.

"A chance to toady some," said Jewett aloud, slapping his knee delightedly. "Well, he knows what's what at this sort of thing," he added, thoughtfully.

Mr. Jewett rose and loitered slowly around the corridor down toward Mrs. Van Vliet's box. He looked in, and Frewan saw him.

"There he is," said Frewan, gladly, "come in, Frank. We were just talking about you."

Mrs. Van Vliet was almost as friendly, and they soon had Jewett between them, smoothing his ruffled feathers and making him comfortable.

"We saw you alone in your box," said Frewan, "and Mrs. Van Vliet remarked that all three of us were being abandoned by our children. I said we ought to get you over, and all have a feast of commiseration. Meanwhile, Mrs. Van Vliet has been sympathizing with me, so I'll leave you to carry on the grief."

Frewan rose and pressing gently Jewett's shoulder, reminded him of old advice to keep in with their principals' women folk. This kindness stirred the board president's contempt, but he acted on the advice.

"How do you count yourself among the childless, Mrs. Van Vliet?" he asked.

"Why, my youngest daughter is about to come out," she said, and she told all about all her children.

Jewett knew all about them, but he pretended to listen, thinking the while how cleverly Frewan had got him into the box, how gracefully he had left him to all this boring stuff. When Frewan appeared in a box filled with handsome young women, Jewett watched them so fiercely that he heard Mrs. Van Vliet only as he had heard the first act of the opera, as sound without sense.

"And now, Mr. Jewett, what am I to do with Fräulein von Oechelhäuser?"

Jewett looked around, bewildered. "Fräul—what?"

Mrs. Van Vliet did not notice his wild reach for the cue.

"She has been a good governess,

kind, patient and successful," she continued, "I'd like to do handsomely by her. Do you know what I've been thinking of?"

"No," said Jewett, feeling rescued. "What?"

"I'd like to marry her off, and well. Can't you suggest some nice, elderly man who would do?"

"I?" said Jewett, ready to snort. But a sudden inspiration came to him, and in his fervor he laid a rude hand on Mrs. Van Vliet's arm.

"Yes," he said, "I know the man—Frewan."

"Mr. Frewan!" Mrs. Van Vliet exclaimed.

"Just the man. Rich, fond of women; position? Lord! no matter what he hasn't got, Frewan has position."

"Wouldn't he be a catch!" Mrs. Van Vliet spoke as if thinking aloud. "Brilliant! But how can we catch him?" she inquired, seriously.

The curtain went up, and Mr. Van Vliet returned, but seeing his wife and Jewett absorbed in conversation, he retired to another box.

"Catch him?" said Jewett. "Catch him? He's the easiest thing to catch that I know of. Most people just whistle to him——"

"Why, Mr. Jewett, what do you mean?" Mrs. Van Vliet was puzzled. "You speak as if you didn't like Mr. Frewan."

"Oh," said Jewett, taking a good grip on himself, "I only mean that he is so soft-hearted, I—we, all his friends are annoyed by his goodness."

"Oh," said Mrs. Van Vliet, half satisfied, "then tell me how I can annoy you. What are the weaknesses that make him so—so——"

"Easy!" Jewett was forgetting again. "One is to take anything that's offered to him. You set Frau—what's her name?"

"Fräulein von Oechelhäuser."

"Yes; well, you leave her around loose and tell Frewan he can have her, and he'll take her all right."

"Oh, Mr. Jewett, I don't believe that!"

"You try it. And if that don't work, you tell Frewan he must take her. He'll do anything you say. Besides, is she clever?"

"Very."

"Good!" said Jewett, rubbing his hands together, "you teach her how to handle Frewan: just listen to him, look up in his face, laugh easy, adore him. That will draw him. With a good pull from you he will come in all right."

"But opportunity," said Mrs. Van Vliet. "How can we make the opportunity?"

"Oh," said Jewett, "make up a small party for a trip somewhere, invite Frewan and take the governess. Fix it so that you'll all fall into couples and so that Frewan and Miss—Miss von what's-her-name will naturally be together."

Mrs. Van Vliet laughed, then became serious, then she laughed again.

"Mr. Jewett, I believe it can be done," she said.

"So do I."

"Will you come along and help?"

"I'd like to. 'Fraid I can't. I'd like to, but I can't. I'm a slave, you know; work for wages and have to earn them. No, I can't go."

Mr. and Mrs. Van Vliet, two younger married people, Chester Frewan and Fräulein von Oechelhäuser were the party Mrs. Van Vliet organized, and they took the inland passage trip up the Alaskan coast. Jewett, who had to remain behind, was not only patient, he was so amiable that Wall Street wondered and his cashier worried over him.

Some of his old cronies, railway and other bank presidents demanded to know what "was tickling him." He finally consented to let them into the secret. He told them the whole plot, and they enjoyed it as much as Jewett.

"A governess!" said one.

"A knock-kneed, sharp-nosed, thin-lipped Dutch woman, with spectacles, and a head full of education," said another.

"And," said Jewett, "the habit of command."

So there were many in Wall Street who went about with smiles and a wish

to have cards to Chester Frewan's wedding.

One day Jewett received a telegram from Mrs. Van Vliet, saying, "If Mr. Frewan telegraphs for you, come." The next, dated a little farther East, was from Frewan.

"Meet us at Chicago, I want to consult you on an important matter." *

On the heels of this came a dispatch from Mr. Van Vliet, inviting him to "join us at Chicago and go back with us."

Jewett laughed. He could not get away promptly, but he caught the party at Chicago. They were on their train waiting for him in the station, and as he came up the platform, Frewan rushed at him excitedly, linked arms with him and drew him aside for a walk.

"Frank," he said, "I feel like a little child, like a boy. You mustn't laugh at me. Mrs. Van Vliet knows all about it, and she approves. Mr. Van Vliet says my face looks like a train running a chain of tunnels, now dark, now all sunshine. I can't tell him. I need you. I've always needed your sound judgment."

"All right," said Jewett, who felt himself a little like the train now rejoicing in the love, now annoyed at the lover. "What's up? Found a gold mine up there?"

"No gold mine!" said Frewan; then he laughed, feverishly. "Yes, a gold mine." He stopped and took both Jewett's hands.

"Frank, I'm in love."

"No!"

"Yes, sir; I'm in love with the dearest, sweetest, most charming—and Frank, she's clever, too. An able woman, educated, noble, splendid. Oh, you must see her!"

"Yes. I'd like to meet her. Where is she? Let's go in."

"No, I want to speak seriously with you," Mr. Frewan said, entering the tunnel again. "Frank, she is not a rich girl. She is poor. I've always thought if I could—but she is of good family, of a very noble family. You see, she isn't quite of our class, not in this coun-

try, but at home, in Germany, her people are of the best. They have a castle, somewhere. But it isn't in their hands now. Her brother sticks to Austria and is in the guard at Vienna. She is a loyal German, and comes over here out of pride. She is loyal to the German Kaiser."

"Well, who is she?" Jewett asked, "what about it, anyway? Let's walk so as not to attract so much attention."

"Were we?" They walked on, Frewan clinging to Jewett's arm. "You see she's a Miss von Oechelhäuser. She's been—she has been teaching the Van Vliet children. Pride, you see. Family row, and all that. Now what do you think? Mrs. Van Vliet says it is a good match. Her beauty and her pride and my, my—well my position at least. And they say my money would make a family in Germany. What do you think?"

"I think your position—" Jewett halted; he took Frewan's two hands. "I think you are fine. The poor governess is nothing, but a governess of the Van Vliet family and noble in her own country is a beautiful thing for a man in your position to help—to love, I mean, and marry."

"Honest?" Frewan asked.

"On the level. But let's go in."

"You think we can make it understood here, in this country? You know there's a lot of ridicule of international marriages."

"Oh, that's against foreign dukes getting our nice girls. For poor Dutch governesses to get our old—boys; that's—that's all right."

"Frank!"

"Well, you know what I mean. Come on in. You stick to the girl, and don't you let anything interfere."

"Business and my position and—my children."

"Now see here," said Jewett, "at our age it is time to let business and 'front' and selfish young ones wait while we take our last gasp. You stick to your girl, no matter what anybody says."

Frewan was so happy that his gratitude pained Jewett, who pulled himself from under his friend and hurried off

to the train. He tried to rid himself of Frewan so as to speak to Mrs. Van Vliet, but the lover followed him. Mrs. Van Vliet said: "Thank you Mr. Jewett—for coming."

"Now come, Frank, and meet her," said Frewan, eagerly.

"She's up by the locomotive with Mr. Van Vliet," said Mrs. Van Vliet.

"Oh, I'll fetch her," said Frewan, and away he went.

"So it worked," said Jewett.

Mrs. Van Vliet hesitated, bit her lip and said: "I think, Mr. Jewett, that a fine man has fallen in love with a fine woman, and that a fine match has been made. Some doubts seemed to arise, worldly considerations. I hope, I believe I see in Mr. Frewan, yes, that a good friend has laid them. Our romance is coming to a happy end, and, Mr. Jewett," she added, seriously, "it has been a beautiful romance, more beautiful than we two conspirators imagined."

Jewett couldn't trust himself to sound in tune, so he went off to his room to dress for dinner. The train was well off on its journey when he was ready. No one else was about. Jewett walked on through the car into the drawing-room carriage in the rear, and was making for the observation platform when he was halted by a woman coming through.

She was a magnificent creature, tall, blonde and as stately as a German lieutenant. Jewett gaped at her, shocked to silence. His eyes noted the noble poise of her fine head, the dignity of her handsome countenance, the round neck and full bust. She was in evening dress, and the banker felt the fleshly luxury of the woman, who paused, drawing herself up more and more proudly, till suddenly she relaxed.

"Oh, is not this Mr. Jewett?" she asked.

Jewett closed his eyes to stop the whirl of his brain, and when he opened them she still was there, standing before him with outstretched hand and upon her face what seemed to him the most gracious smile he had ever seen.

"It is Mr. Jewett. It must be—Mr. Frewan's dearest friend."

"Yes'm," said Jewett, bowing, and he took her hand, blinking.

"And you," he muttered, "you are Fräulein—"

"Von Oechelhäuser, Mr. Jewett."

"I know," said Jewett.

So like a sob did his words sound, that the lady was astonished, then kind.

"Come out upon the platform," she said, "let us talk there. Mr. Frewan

has praised you more than any man or woman he ever has mentioned to me. He admires your ability, he seems to bow down in worship of your judgment and he has a true affection for you, a sentiment that is beautiful to see in one man for another. Do tell me about him. I know he's kind and generous and graceful—an American nobleman, but I want to hear you talk of him as you know him, as a man among men."

They were seated now on the platform. The liquid flow of the track out from under their car was the only perfectly clear thing in Jewett's mind.

"I can't," said Jewett, "not now." He seemed to grope for a clear understanding, but when he looked again at this woman beside him, he gave up. "Pardon me," he said, "I feel—I don't think I feel quite well."

Up she sprang. "Oh," she said, "I'll call."

"No, don't," he begged as he rose, "I can go to my room alone. Thank you and"—she was shocked now—"forgive me, madam. Pardon my rudeness."

A servant came and Jewett seized the assumed illness as a way out of the scrape he was in. He pretended to feel weak, took the man's arm and, turning to the lady, he said:

"Madam, believe me, I love Chester Frewan, and I love those he loves. I do," he said, with strange emotion, "I love those he loves."

Back in his room, he closed the door and sank into a chair.

"The most beautiful woman I ever saw," he muttered, "and I got her for Chester Frewan! I laid her—I laid that lovely creature in a trap for him."

He drew up both feet, put them

against a chair and sent the piece flying against the wall. It broke. He got up, examined it and then he grinned. His eye caught his mirror, and he looked in at his own face.

"Oh, you ass! You self-made, complicated, highly-finished ass!"

But the words grew upon him and he pondered. He sat down and thought it over. Whether it was envy, jealousy or love, he could not tell. All he was sure of was that he coveted the woman. The bank, his family, all other things became trivial in his eyes beside this splendid woman.

There was a knock at the door and instead of answering, he stared at the knob. Chester Frewan came in.

"What's the matter, Frank?" he asked, anxiously.

Jewett was sure of one thing; he must be ill till he had regained his self-control; illness would cover up all his assininity. He did not have to answer now. Frewan came to him, took his hand and said:

"You're cold, old fellow. You are really ill. Let me help you into bed."

Jewett nodded weak permission and rose slowly to undress. The tenderness of Frewan amazed him; but didn't soften him and he crept into bed to think out some things.

"Now leave me," he said; "please don't bother, Frewan."

And Frewan obeyed; he went reluctantly, casting back a worried look, but he was kind enough to go.

Before Jewett had things straightened out, Mr. Van Vliet came in. That was

not so bad. Jewett was glad to see him.

"You're overworked, Jewett," he said, "you better take a vacation. And, by the way, I'll give you a commission abroad that will please you. Mrs. Van Vliet is interested in Fräulein von Oechelhäuser; says Frewan is going to ask her to marry him. Now, she is a fine woman; she is of a noble German family, ruined by the adherence of her brother to the Austrian Emperor. Their castle in Germany is confiscated, but it can be bought back. I want you to get it for her. Damn the brother. She has quarreled with him. If Frewan marries her I'll present them with her old estate. That will reward the best woman I know, a woman who has trained my whole family not only in manners, but in the fine feelings back of fine manners, and it will reward the most faithful friend I've had in business. And you—you can do the best friend you ever had a fine turn. Will you do it?"

Jewett whispered faintly, "Yes." He rolled back toward the wall.

"You're weak, Jewett. I'm going to stop the train for a physician."

"No," said Jewett, in better voice.

"Don't. All I want is rest. Let me sleep and I'll be all right to-morrow morning. Mr. Van Vliet," he added, eagerly, "we'd better not let it be known in Wall Street that I was ill."

"Of course not. I shouldn't think—"

"It probably wouldn't affect stocks," said Jewett, "but then again it might. They make the most of the slightest thing down there, you know."



THE TROLLEY AND THE MERMAID

By Felicia Goddard

WE all know that there is a watering-place which it is sacrilege to call fashionable, so far does its bright exclusiveness transcend the adjective.

Here one evening in August three gentlemen, who had been dining together, were enjoying their after-dinner cigars. The night was warm. Though the windows were open to the sea, no breath stirred the curtains, and a fog hung about the horizon.

The man at the head of the table glanced at his watch.

"The wagonette will be here in a few minutes," he said, "and the fight will be on. We oughtn't," he added, reflectively, "to find it so very difficult to persuade the meeting that such a trolley line, far from being an advantage, will do more to injure real estate—"

"I beg your pardon," said a younger man, interrupting him, "but in my opinion we shall have a great deal of difficulty. Whatever we say, the town will regard us as greedy capitalists looking after our own interests."

"That will hardly be just," replied Austin, gravely.

The meeting this evening was to be the climax of a long struggle, and, he might have added, his own intimate interests had already suffered owing to his determination to be present. Bache Austin was a man somewhat over thirty, a man of wealth, of leisure, and intermittently of a serious turn of mind; that is to say, that occasionally some incentive to activity spurred him through the armor in which circumstances and a natural vein of laziness had incased him. Such an incentive he had found in the prospect

of a trolley line skirting the property which had been his grandfather's before him. His motives were not wholly selfish. He loved the town of his birth, and was never weary of showing it generosity, as a new library attested. He sincerely believed it was about to be defaced to no purpose, and he flung himself into the conflict, a conflict which one way or the other was to be decided by the meeting to-night.

The sacrifice that he had made in order to attend the meeting, lay simply in the fact that his wife had that morning started for Bar Harbor without him. They had been married but a few months, she was much younger than he; she was lovely and egotistical, or, to be exact, possessed of a somewhat exaggerated estimate of the amount of pleasure that life owed her—a supreme confidence in the justice of her own wishes. The invitation to join a party on the schooner of a friend was one she had accepted unhesitatingly, and Austin, forgetting the date of his all-important meeting, had at first acquiesced. Later, when he remembered, a dispute lasting some days had begun. She had refused to take his refusal as final. He had refused to see that the question was still open. At length, most unfortunately, the situation occurred to her as one in which it was necessary to conquer. He would not look at it from this point of view, and would offer her nothing but facts and common sense, when a little emotional psychology was evidently demanded. The matter seemed to be ended, when at ten o'clock that very morning she had gone aboard, and the yacht had soon after weighed anchor.

To weigh anchor is one thing, however, and to depart another. They were scarcely out of the harbor when the breeze dropped. At four a sailor brought Austin a note, which said:

"Have you seen us drifting off your rocks all day? I am told there won't be any breeze until after sunset, so there is still time. Come to me. I have no doubt it would be much wiser, nobler, juster, anything you please, for you to stay, but I am not enjoying myself without you. Does anything else matter?"

"ELISE."

It was not only obstinacy and a sense of duty, but a knowledge of the game that made Austin write back:

"Have I seen you all day? Am I blind, or not a lover that you should ask such a question? Does anything matter but your enjoyment? Yes, that you should love me matters a thousand times more. Some importance, also, attaches to the trolley. I do not join you."

B. A."

These events of the day were present in Austin's mind, even as leaning across his dinner table he outlined his speech for the evening. This, he had scarcely concluded when the butler appeared in the doorway.

"The carriage, Simpkins?"

"No, sir. Little Miss Dalrymple from next door has called, and would like to borrow——"

"—— a landing net," cried little Miss Dalrymple, bounding into the room.

There was something in her appearance that suggested the fact that little Miss Dalrymple's toilet had been made hastily, and without the assistance of her nurse; her shoes betrayed her, for they were unquestionably thrust upon the wrong feet, so that the two long lines of buttons clicked together as she moved. Her costume was, most literally, completed by a peajacket buttoned tightly over her nightgown, an ample garment, which at this constriction almost trailed upon the ground. Evidently she and Austin were old friends, and she had counted on finding him alone, for now, on perceiving strangers in the room, she stood an instant twisting the toes of one foot round the ankle of the other, hanging her head until her curls, which had been carefully pinned up for the night in a hard knot on the

top of her head, escaped, and came tumbling over her face. Then she incontinently fled, Austin pursuing.

At the front door he caught up with her.

"Now, what do you want a landing-net for at this hour?" he asked in mild remonstrance.

For an instant embarrassment overcame her, then the hot word "*mermaids*" was blown into his ear.

"They're rather rare on these coasts," said Austin.

The little girl nodded. "I know, but I saw her. I got out of bed when Ellen went downstairs to see her cousin, the watchman, and I ran down to the rocks, and there she was. She came floating into the pool on a wave, her hair shined in the moonlight—real golden mermaid hair—and she half climbed up on the rocks, and she was singing a song. It said:

"I breathe, I move,—

Without my love

I do not live, nor is there joy in living.

Talk not to me

Of mirth and jollity,

For how may such things be,

Save of his giving?"

and lots more like that, only I can't remember."

But Austin remembered, remembered well. An idea seemed to strike him. The wagonette was already at the door. He gave orders that it should take his guests to the town hall, and return at once for him. Then he followed Miss Dalrymple, who was already dancing across the lawn toward the sea.

The pool was a small, circular opening in rocks, high enough to conceal it from the shore side. To the ocean there was a break where the waves tumbled in, and sucked out again interminably. Here, sure enough, when they gained a pinnacle of rock, a golden head was visible.

"I did not know, did you?" queried Miss Dalrymple on rapid indrawn breaths; "I didn't know that they wore black, shiny clothes like that?"

"Ah, these northern waters," said Austin. "Doubtless the tropical variety

——"

He was cut short by an excited, "How shall we catch her?"

"Why," he considered. "I think you should step before her, brandishing your landing net, and cry, 'Now, yield ye, yield ye, mermaid, to our grace.'"

And this, having hastily scrambled into view, sometimes upright, but more often on all fours, Miss Dalrymple proceeded to do.

The mermaid naturally started, and, turning, observed Austin for the first time. They looked at each other with an intensity forbidden to beings of different elements. Then he said with cold determination:

"You are probably aware that by law all whales, fish, wreckage and mermaids washed up on this beach become thereby the property of the owner of said beach. I am the owner."

"I wasn't washed up," said the mermaid, perhaps a little flippantly. "I swam ashore."

"It's the same thing in the eye of the law," replied the owner.

Miss Dalrymple, who had been looking anxiously from one to the other, now approached and murmured, suggestively: "But haven't I any right to her? You know I found her."

"You may come and visit her once a week," said the owner.

"What are you going to keep her in? A tank?"

Mr. Austin paused. "Well, he said at length, "I was rather thinking of a marble fountain on the lawn. She would look well in the landscape from the drawing-room windows. Don't you agree with me?"

He addressed little Miss Dalrymple, but the mermaid answered: "No, I shouldn't care for that at all."

"There would be water lilies, you know, and Egyptian iris," Austin pursued.

"It would be so cold in winter."

"Oh, no. A glass globe and steam heat, to say nothing of raising the temperature of the water——"

"And I should be lonely," said the mermaid.

"Believe me, no," said Austin with emphasis.

"Besides, how would you get me so far? Tails, you know, are almost useless for walking."

Here Miss Dalrymple had a nautical suggestion. "You might put her on rollers like your boat after the high tide."

At this the mermaid and the gentleman almost exchanged a smile, but he said gravely: "I think I could undertake to get you to the fountain."

"Ah, but you couldn't keep me there. The sea would come in for me, a mile and more high," she waved an extremely pretty arm, "and sweep you and your house away to mid-ocean."

Miss Dalrymple cast an apprehensive glance toward the sea, which seemed particularly calm in the mist and moonlight. The outlines of a schooner could be discerned at no great distance.

"And then," continued the mermaid, threateningly, "then you would have to come with me."

"As a moral man," said Austin, "I should yield to nothing but compulsion."

"You ought to be ashamed," said the mermaid, "married as you are."

"How does she know you're married?" whispered little Miss Dalrymple.

"They're very sophisticated," said Austin, sadly.

"On the whole," said the mermaid, "I don't think I shall come and live in your fountain. It sounds cramped."

"It is better for some people to be cramped."

"Not for a mermaid."

"Then she was foolish to come ashore on my beach."

"I shan't stay long."

"You have become my property."

"I shall go away in a few minutes, and take you, too."

Miss Dalrymple twitched his hand. "Don't go," she whispered. "They are cruel creatures. You can't trust them."

"No one knows it better than I," returned Austin, with feeling.

"Do you know," said Miss Dalrymple, in a burst of confidence, "I think she looks just a little, just the least little bit, the way Miss Lise did when she

was Miss 'Lise, and you brought her to see mamma."

"Why, now you mention it, perhaps there is a likeness," Austin admitted, "except, of course, for that cruel mermaid look."

"Ah, he may talk," said the mermaid, "but he's coming away with me just the same."

"He's not," retorted Miss Dalrymple, with spirit.

The mermaid nodded her head in an irritating way. "This very night," she said.

"Are you?" asked Miss Dalrymple, and Austin shook his head in reply, but his eyes were on the mermaid's. They exchanged a long look.

Miss Dalrymple apprehended a deadlock.

"Well," she said, judicially, "if you won't go to sea with her, and she won't come on shore for you, I don't see what you are going to do, except——"

"Stay here forever," said Austin. "Well, it might be managed." He sat down on the rocks very close to the mermaid. "I can imagine sitting here all night. The moon would get lower and lower, and this mermaid would tell me all about herself and the sea. And, finally, the moon would set, and it would be quite dark until——"

"Oh, don't do it," cried Miss Dalrymple in an agony; "it wouldn't be safe."

Austin's mournful shake of the head admitted the truth of this.

"She might sing to you and cast a spell over you, like that man who wandered so much in Greek history, so that you wouldn't care for anything else but her. Come away, please come away before it is too late."

Without making any motion to obey, Austin looked up at little Miss Dalrymple where she hovered anxiously

above him. "I'm afraid it's too late already," he said, solemnly. "I feel all the worst symptoms. Duty? Pooh! Conscience? A mere name. A dreadful sloth—a culpable contentment steals over me. I see a lovely being sitting on a rock. I care for nothing else. Yes, it is too late, much too late."

There was silence full of hideous portent. Then Miss Dalrymple saw with horror that his hand rested on that of the mermaid. She reflected that for her it was not too late, and she started for home as fast as two short legs could carry her.

The next morning as Mr. and Mrs. Austin were sitting at breakfast, the former might be observed to be reading a letter.

"—— a triumph," he read, "which is largely attributable to your delicacy in remaining away from the meeting, lest, in view of your recent generosity in the matter of the library, your well-known bias should exercise undue influence. I am sure I am speaking for many besides myself when I say——"

He looked up and smiled: "Well, Elise," he said, "there won't be any trolley."

On this a small figure entered stealthily through the French window.

"Where is the mermaid?" asked little Miss Dalrymple, in a stage whisper.

Mr. and Mrs. Austin were silent.

"I thought you had gone away, Miss 'Lise."

"I'm going this morning—so is my husband."

"Miss 'Lise, were you the mermaid?" said Miss Dalrymple, leaping at once to the heart of the matter.

"Yes," said Austin. "She always was, and I'm afraid she always will be, but you must not tell any one."

"It's a secret," said little Miss Dalrymple, glowing with importance.



PHANTOM MILLIONS

By Edgar Saltus

OYEZ: In Paris sooner or later, and the sooner the better, there will be heard a case which is too good to be true. That is its merit and also its demerit. Known as the Humbert Hoax, it discloses a play of fancy, a depth of guile and a fund of cynicism that quite amount to genius. The details follow hereinafter. Before considering them it is worth noting that not since the great days of Monte Cristo and the yet greater days of Cagliostro has Europe produced anything with which for sheer devilry it can be compared.

Personally, we prefer it to "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." We prefer it even to "Lost Sir Massingberd." The latter, published years ago, concerned a most audacious baronet, who after various villainesses, vanished in a paragraph, and reappeared as a skeleton in the trunk of a tree.

It was a good story, but it might have been worse. For that, though, there is an excuse. It was written for the middle classes, for people to whom the improbable is synonymous with immorality, and who regard it as unholy to believe that there are more surprises in life than in death.

The Humbert Hoax is a case in point. In "Lost Sir Massingberd" there is a vanishing baronet. Here are vanishing litigants, phantom millions, pauper plutocrats, a grand phantasmagoria, in which the beneficiary of an imaginary testator takes an absence of anything, a zero with the periphery eliminated, and from it produces a safe full of government bonds, which latter, paraded before the eyes of financiers, crumble suddenly into a copper coin.

The audaciousness and various vile-

nesses of Sir Massingberd become nursery pranks beside the satanic episodes of this grand masquerade. What is a skeleton in the trunk of a tree beside a safe with a penny in it? What is a wicked man who takes to flight beside a wicked woman who takes in the Jews? The baronet contented himself with disappearing. He had to. The prejudices of the middle classes prevented him from doing better. Unhandicapped by any such nonsense, the heroine in the present story not merely disappeared, millions of money disappeared with her, and, through their subtraction added to the gayety of nations and the jubilation of the press.

A story such as that has several charms. It combines the dramatic, the devilish and the delicious. Considered as a romance, it knocks everything else into a cocked hat. Considered as a case, the Druce suit does not hold a candle to it. In the latter, the daughter-in-law of a tradesman recognized a dead duke as the grandfather of her child. In the present instance the daughter-in-law of a Minister of Justice caused herself to be recognized as the heiress of a plutocrat who never lived.

There is a story with material enough in it for a circulating library. It revolves, too, precisely as it should, in high life. It has the great charm also of seeming too good—or too bad—to be true. It elucidates a mystery and incidentally a crime. What novel could do more?

But Oyez: In a rose garden of Toulouse, once upon a time, there lived a girl named Therese. Her father was a peasant. In lieu of beauty, he gave her brains, and a lip instead of lucre. In

addition, she had a sister, several brothers, and a good deal to put up with. With such a dower, a girl may go far. Therese did. Her first journey was with a New York family that annexed her as maid. The family proceeded to Nice. On the way, Therese acquired two items of information; first, that New York is remote; second, that it is a Vesuvius of gold pieces. Presently, the New Yorkers vacated Nice for their native and distant volcano. Therese was left to her own devices. Here the plot thickens.

In Nice acquaintances may be made with a beautiful absence of ceremony. Therese was not ceremonious. She met a young man named Humbert. He was poor, but not proud. In the course of communions with her, he beheld poverty retreat and pride approach. And naturally. During the interlude directly preceding these communions Therese had so tenderly tended an aged and ailing American that the latter, dying with American abruptness, had yet found time to make her heiress of all his wealth. Yes, all. Every sou of it. It amounted to not a centime less than a hundred million francs.

When, with her enchanting lisp, Therese mentioned these figures to Humbert, he fell as one dead. On recovery, he pressed the girl to declare her intentions. Then, shyly, she consented to become his bride. Here the plot grows thicker.

Humbert's father, then Minister of Justice, received Therese with a smile. Between the two there occurred that immediate understanding which is the secret of sister souls. In his quality of father, he attended to the little matter of her inheritance. In his quality of Minister of Justice, he advised her in regard to an action that ensued. For the American had found time, on the same day, to make two wills, one, as has been related, devising all to Therese, and the other leaving but an annuity to her and the rest to his nephews, Henry and Robert Crawford.

This was most annoying, or, rather, would have been, had not the nephews turned out to be very decent chaps, quite

as rich as their uncle, and anxious, if at all, merely for an amicable suit which should determine their rights.

As a result, they appeared by counsel, and entered with Therese into an argument whereby, pending decision on their reciprocal status, the millions invested in government bonds, were to be inventoried by the court and officially sealed in a safe of which Therese was to be custodian.

It was further agreed that, pending said decision, should the safe be opened or the securities touched, Therese forfeited all right and title to the property.

As it was stipulated, so it was done, and just there the plot is at its thickest. For, though the agreement was certainly very decent of the nephews, yet of that decency they hastily repented, and through their counsel threatened to sue Therese for the recovery of the entire estate.

What are you to do with chaps like that? Therese protested with such vigor and vehemence that, out of shame, perhaps, they entered into another stipulation whereby they agreed on a compromise of three millions apiece. But whom may one trust? No sooner was this second agreement executed than these unaccountable chaps again changed their minds, and this time brought suit.

But there was their agreement. As a result, they were thrown out of court. Therese was ordered to turn over to them six millions, and to pocket the rest.

With this decree a less scrupulous woman would have been satisfied. Therese appealed. She showed that, pending decision on her status, she had expressly agreed not to open the safe, and that to do so would entail forfeiture of her rights.

At this contention, Henry Crawford withdrew. But Robert opposed it. He was defeated. Then Henry took it up. He did not stop there. Alleging that his brother was in collusion with Therese, he brought an action against him. He was non-suited; he appealed, was non-suited again; lay low for a while, and again brought suit. Pres-

ently, he stepped out and his brother stepped in. When one wearied, there was the other. Then sometimes jointly, sometimes severally, they pleaded, counterpleaded and appealed. It seemed as though the very devil were in them. It seemed as though their one object in life were the persecution of Therese.

The lady accepted it all in spirit truly Christian, and meanwhile in a semi-royal palace in which she had assembled her sister and brothers, she lived in quasi-state. She could not, of course, touch the millions in the safe, before which—delightful precaution—day and night sentinels paced, for that would not have been honorable, but she could borrow money on her rights. And she did, God bless her. She borrowed right and left, she borrowed from the Bank of France, and even loaned to the House of Orleans. Her splendid home was filled with representatives of the *Almanach de Gotha*, and also with representatives of the *Almanach du Ghetto*. From the former she got cachet, from the latter coin. At the Elysee, at the Opera, at Longchamps, at the embassy balls, at the official entertainments of the most exclusive grand duchesses and the least exclusive archdukes she always was first in the push. She had got there.

Meanwhile, her father-in-law, the elder Humbert, previously Minister of Justice, now President of the Senate, as such, a species of mandarin, girt with the insignia of office, entitled to and surrounded by every mark of the highest respect, stood by and smiled. He and Therese were, indeed, sister souls. They understood each other completely.

Meanwhile, also, an occasional doubt, a query or a suspicion was expressed. In the growing ranks of the creditors now and again there was a suicide, now and again there was a trip to the aisles of the insane. But creditors are always unreasonable when they are not absurd. In this instance they were both. Behind Therese loomed the tall figure of Humbert the sacrosanct, refracting the rays of reflected respect.

What better guarantee could any creditor require? Yet to such lengths

will the suspicious go that some declared that during the years of litigation no human being had ever once set eyes on the Crawfords. But that, of course, was lunacy. The afflicted were put in a straitjacket and *en voiture pour Charenton*. This phase of dementia was exceeded by another, which took the form spasmodic skepticism, complicated with violent negation. The creditors whom this variety of insanity attacked declared that they were rooked, that the original Crawford never existed, that the millions were myths, that America was a chimerical country invented by Therese. To such stuff, of course, no one listened, and the mouthers shot themselves in the anterooms of the Toulousians' splendid halls. Then there was a third class of creditors that wept, and there was a fourth that fought.

Among the latter was a big man with a small debt. The others might weep, or wait, or go to the devil. He proposed to be paid. But Therese was a brilliant conversationalist. When he called "Stop, thief!" at her, she cried "Usurer!" at him. That is repartee. Yet not the retort courteous. The elder Humbert would not have counseled it. But he had gone. Full of years and honors, he had descended—with a smile—to the grave.

"Ah! I am a usurer, am I?" said the big man with the little debt. "Good. We shall see."

Thereat, in a Goethean effort for light, he told his tale to the press. This time there were listeners. Among them was a judge, new to the bench, on whom the elder Humbert had lacked the time to smile. He ordered that the safe be opened. "Thank God," cried Therese; "at last my enemies are confounded!"

In so saying she spoke the truth. That is an accident that may happen to any woman. It had never happened to Therese before. The slip of her lisping tongue mortified her. To conceal that mortification, she proceeded to conceal herself. Her sister did, too, her brothers, also, her husband as well. While thus engaged, the safe was opened.

At the sight of that gigantic hold, be-

fore which guards had patrolled, and in which a hundred million francs were officially attested to be, the enemies of the lady were, indeed, confounded. It contained precisely one collar button and a penny.

Where are the Metamorphoses of Ovid after that? Like the witcheries of that poem, these bewilderments seem too marvelous to have actually occurred. Yet they not only did occur, but on the strength of nothing more ponderable than a belief—perhaps justified—in human stupidity, Therese was enabled to lead for twenty years a life of active brigandage, to fill her house with the pick of the basket, to participate in the emotions of the Orleanist plot, to entertain dukes and princesses, to bamboozle them all, to bamboozle the world—an accomplishment which is rumored to be easy—and to bamboozle the Ghetto, an accomplishment which, though rumored to be difficult, must be easy, too.

In the course of her astounding career, this woman hocus-pocued the astutest, did them out of the equivalent of twenty million dollars, bestrewing her path with suicides and festivals, hypnotizing the recalcitrant, enchanting the naïf, retaining as stool-pigeons the ablest lawyers, inspiring them with the amplest confidence, with a confidence so ample that some of them retain portions of it yet, inspiring even herself with confidence, with a belief in what she termed her star, and then suddenly, *Presto! . . . Bonjour!* She has gone, leaving not a trace behind, not a p. p. c., leaving nothing, nothing whatever, save an avenue of graves, a Himalaya of debts, a collar button and a penny.

Where, indeed, are the Metamorphoses of Ovid? Where, by comparison, are the Mysteries of Udolpho? Where, for that matter are Stevenson and Gaboriau, and Collins and Poe? The ghosts of these fabulists may hide their diminished shades. The deviltries which they evolved are children's romps beside the inventions of this lady.

But *palmam ferat qui meruit*. The originator of this swindle, which, parenthetically, eclipses all others, including that

of the Queen's Necklace, was not so much Therese as her father-in-law, who, by virtue of his office, was enabled to facilitate the probating of the illusory will that made her heiress of imaginary millions, and who, by virtue of that same office, was enabled to facilitate the production of a second and equally illusory will that devised the imaginary millions to people quite as imaginary, who, in the same way, was enabled to facilitate the litigation between frauds and phantoms that ensued, and, on the strength of which, this monumental hoax was founded.

It is agreeable to note that the counsel who appeared for the Crawford boys believed in their existence as firmly as he believed in his own. Of course, he never saw them. But they continually wrote to him, and whenever he seemed about to score in their favor, he received from Therese letters of violent abuse. "How," he has recently, publicly and pathetically asked, "how, after that could I doubt their existence?" Good, natural man, we have a place for thee in our heart.

But, of the lot, old Humbert interests us most. Surrounded by the respect of the community, a respect which must have amused him not a little, enjoying therewith multiple opportunities for the gauging of human nature, it is probable that he was rather cynical.

A cynic may be defined as one who does not share our illusions. The elder Humbert could have had few either to share or to spare. And, in weaving this plot, which is at once curious, brilliant and diabolic, we assume he concluded that, if stupidity hurt, many there are that would yell. We assume that the deduction cheered the old man. We assume also that that which particularly cheered him was the knowledge that some day the truth would appear and shock the middle classes. It may be that, if he had a regret, it was that he would not be here to enjoy it. It is our regret also. He deserves abuse, of course, but also applause. For what he lacked in illusions he made up in fun, and his crimes were those of a genius.

MRS. WINSHIP'S DOLOR

By Richard Duffy

"MY dear Mrs. Winship," he said, leaning significantly on the second word, "my dear Amy, why will you not make me happy and let me devote the rest of my life——"

"My dear Mr. Taylor," she interposed, mockingly, "my dear Rodney," and her brown eyes twinkled at him across the breakfast table, "why should I desire what is left of your life?"

"Now, Amy, you must admit that during the past five years——"

Rodney's tone was pleadingly argumentative.

"Most assuredly, Rodney. During the past five years you have been faithful as my shadow."

Rodney sighed.

"You have kept every eligible man away from a deserving widow. You have almost ruined my daughter's chances of marriage——"

His face flushed, and he raised a deprecating hand.

"Please don't interrupt, Rodney. You can deny everything I assert—but you must wait till I have done. As I was saying, people used to wonder whether you were paying court to me or to Emily. And you have proposed to me on all occasions and at the least provocation. Do you remember at Lenox last September? The walk across the hills, the sudden downpour and both of us drenched to the bone?"

"Yes," Rodney's round head nodded weakly, and his cheerful face was shaded with melancholy.

"And that choppy Sunday morning we came down here from Newport on the *Aspasia*? I've hardly forgiven you for that yet, Rodney. You ought to

have known that the sea was bothering me, or I never would have been so dull."

"I've never forgiven myself," he blurted, "that is—I mean——"

"And now you select the breakfast table, and on this morning above all. I've just got a stupid lot of guests off my hands; we are alone for the first time in a fortnight. We are perfectly happy; good air, good coffee, good bread and butter. Why must you spoil Arcady by bringing up the question of marriage?"

"Amy," he replied, bluntly, "I think you enjoy poking fun at me." He drew a cigar from his case. "May I?"

She smiled consent.

They were breakfasting on the veranda of Mrs. Winship's cottage at Goose Cove, Long Island. The lawn, pied with many-shaped flower beds, sloped in gentle decline to the waters of Hamset Bay. They could see the *Aspasia*, Rodney's yacht, at anchor. They could see men of the crew, outlined sharp in white duck, walking and twisting and climbing in their daily task of putting the lithe, polished steamer in shape. Except for short runs up and down the sound, the *Aspasia* had been here at anchor for four weeks. Rodney went aboard to sleep every night. In the morning it was his habit to swim the ship's length twice before getting into his clothes. Then he would dress with the greatest care as to the colorings on his shirt, the marking on his hose and the shade of his bow tie. After that he filled his case with long, thin, black cigars. Once Mrs. Winship had called him an anarchist for color. He had never for-

gotten the criticism. No more would he have forgotten a compliment from her lips.

They were certainly very appetizing lips: so healthily red, with such a significance of lusciousness and no sign of heavy fullness. Her skin, too, was most wholesome—white, hard, seemingly moist, with the humidity of cleanly blood. Her eyes, that Rodney had scrutinized so often and always so unavailingly, were brown—warm with light and shadow's flashing interchange. Her hair, brown and fine and thick, was shot with strange *nuances* that came out boldly in certain lights. In a sacrilegious moment Rodney remembered to have asked himself: "I wonder if she has ever used any—" He did not formulate the question in full, even to himself. He answered himself quickly. "No, she's a Catholic. Goes to confession, and all that. I'm sure she never has—"

"A hundred thousand dollars for your thoughts, Rodney," Mrs. Winship cried, suddenly crashing into his reveries.

"They're worth it just now," he replied on the instant, his big white teeth gleaming in a smile.

"Now you think I'll beg to know what they are, don't you?"

Rodney drew up his eyebrows solemnly: "Amy, there's one thing I'm sure of."

"Tell me it, child." She pulled a doleful face.

"If ever we're married, there'll be no use in my trying to conceal anything from you." He made the admission guiltily.

"My dear boy," she said, smilingly, "do you think we could ever have such a good time over breakfast if we were married? I'm sure not. Somehow married people always breakfast better alone. Dinner's their meal. Lunch-con's for lovers, especially naughty lovers. Breakfast is for old friends."

"And yet, we're just a little more than friends, are we not?" His steady blue eyes questioned her above the point of flame as he held a match to relight his cigar. His genial, tolerant smile

played in the show of his teeth, in the wrinkles about his eyes.

"Rodney, if it were not for your sense of humor, what a bore you would be. Why are you always so cheerful after a refusal?"

"My dear Amy, I am cheerful because I am still allowed to come 'round. I say to myself, 'But she didn't say be off and never come here again.' Why, Amy, little woman, you don't know how happy I am simply to be near you!" He held his right hand up as though taking an oath.

"Pshaw, Rodney!" But her cheeks warmed and her eyes glowed with satisfaction.

"My dear little woman," he went on, placidly, "it's heaven. And then, you see, I can propose again some time, perhaps on a more auspicious occasion."

"Rodney, don't you see that we are quite too perfect as friends ever to marry. In friendship men and women live in illusion; in marriage they don't."

"It may be. It may be. And yet you're simply adorable, my dear!" He blew out a mouthful of smoke hard, as his chest heaved with the emotion that burdened it.

"Beware, Rodney, you know more than one proposal on the same day is against the rules of the game."

"Oh, I'm not the only one in this vicinity in danger of proposing to-day."

"You mean—?"

"Ralph Ashbrooke, he's the other."

Mrs. Winship's playful mood vanished. Her eyelids drew slightly together as she studied Rodney's expression of commingled warning and quizzicalness.

"Ha, ha! you're afraid, eh, my dear?" He chuckled.

"Of what, Rodney? The joke's all yours."

"Why, that Ashbrooke will win mother's handsome daughter, of course."

"Ashbrooke in love with Emily?"

"He's been in love with her from the moment he met her, let me see, two years ago. And you've never been the same, Amy, since you felt he would win her from you."

"You don't think he proposes to her every time he has the chance, do you?" Mrs. Winship laughed suspiciously.

"He doesn't need to. He's lucky—that's the only word for it—and he's been lucky all his life. He has so much money that even I think he's rich. And I know a rich man when I see one. Magnificent house in town, waiting for a wife fitted to make proper use of all Ashbrooke's goods and his impeccable position. Lovely old castle over there on the harbor crest, Grey Towers, the showplace of the neighborhood. Pictures of it have been printed in the magazines. Finest horses owned by any man in the East, and a record-breaking auto. Has a yacht, too," Rodney's voice fell, "and it floats. I shall say no more of it. And they've published pictures of that. Why, compared to the *Aspasia*—well—well—and Ralph Ashbrooke's handsome, that is, his black eyes are, his hair and his mustache are handsome. Everybody says so. But, worst of all envies to men of forty-five, he's young, he's young!"

"Ralph Ashbrooke young, Rodney! Why, you dear old sentimental sea captain, he's forty if he's a day. He came out of Yale with—"

"Quite possible, my dear, quite possible. But he looks young, he acts young, he feels young—he is young. And there's not a man of his age that has got so much out of life. He's drunk deep and clear. See him to-day: fresh, sound and slim," Rodney glanced unconsciously at his zealously guarded waist line. "Why, Amy, the man's a romantic hero, and the best of it is he's a man in spite of it. There's hardly a girl among the best and proudest, that, had she half a chance, would not nab him gladly."

"Do you think Emily is one of the best and proudest, Rodney?" Mrs. Winship spoke as if her words were divorced from her thoughts.

"Emily? Emily? No, she's not. Emily is in no class. She stands alone. She's a woman, a good, handsome, keen—"

"Remember, she's just twenty."

"I know, but she's mature. She

never could be a giddy *débutante*. I think that's why Ashbrooke took to her from the first, and then he felt he would have to win her. Most men would be afraid to try."

"Rodney, I think you're in love with Emily yourself."

"Now, isn't that a woman's deduction? By Jove, I might just as well say you are in love with Ashbrooke."

At this moment the puff and rattle of an automobile caught their ears, and Emily Winship wheeled sharply around the corner of the house in a runabout. She brought the machine to a stop opposite them.

"Good-morning, folks," she hailed from below.

Both Mrs. Winship and Rodney rose and leaned over the rail, returning her salutation.

"Are you going over to the convent to mass, mother?" Emily inquired.

Mrs. Winship reflected.

"Don't let me keep you from church," Rodney interposed, with solemn humor.

Mrs. Winship smiled at him indulgently. His eyes kindled at the sight of her tiny, even teeth.

"Why, yes, Emily. I'm glad you thought to call for me."

"We've just enough time," said the daughter, with a glance at the clock on the dashboard.

"I need only my hat and gloves," Mrs. Winship returned, as she stepped quickly between the high windows into the house.

"Must be quite a strain to be a Catholic, Emily. Now, we're only expected to go to church on Sunday." Rodney talked as he went to the steps and down to the side of the runabout.

"Only expected? We *have* to go Sunday."

"Well, it's so very interesting in your church, I suppose you don't mind."

"Do you ever go?"

"To my church?"

"No; to ours."

"Oh, yes. When I was in Paris, in fact, on the Continent, I went nearly every Sunday. The music is fine. Be-

sides, it fills out the day; a man gets so lonely in a foreign place on Sunday."

With her prayer-book in one hand, and holding her skirts above her small feet, Mrs. Winship came running out of the house. She was so lithe and girlish that Rodney commented to himself:

"By Jove, she's as young as her daughter!" He helped her into the runabout, enjoying the firm, cool feel of her arm as she sprang aboard his lift.

"Where are you bound, Rodney?" she asked, settling herself and smiling her thanks.

"I'm going down to look over the boat."

"Luncheon with us?"

"What if you and Emily have luncheon with me on the *Aspasia*? We took some new supplies aboard last night. What do you say, Emily?"

"What do you say, mother?"

"Splendid! At one?"

"At one, and then we'll choo-choo up the Sound a little way."

"Oh, good!" cried Mrs. Winship.

Rodney raised his cap and bowed profoundly. The runabout shot past him. He watched it speed down the hill toward the village for a moment. Then he turned toward the shore. As he took his way slowly he pursed up his lips and began to whistle, haltingly and out of tune, Tosti's "Good-by." But his thoughts ran: "Superb! What a nature! Life; joy; good heart! And pretty! Yet hardly the marrying kind. Still——." He whistled louder and farther away from the key, and felt new courage.

The Convent of St. Gudule stood on a high hill about half a mile further inland than the village of Goose Cove. At the convent chapel Mrs. Winship frequently attended mass during the week. On Sundays she and her daughter were the local celebrities in the middle aisle of the village church. Mrs. Winship had supplied almost all the money required to build the new St. Joseph's. Old St. Joseph's had been a sweaty, grimy, wooden building. New St. Joseph's was a quaint, half-intended

imitation of an English country church. To be sure, no interference had been allowed with the rules according to which all Roman Catholic churches must be built. But Mrs. Winship's wish, that the church be built of stone furnished by her, was gratified. Hers was the suggestion also that the rectory be a low, rambling building, of like stone and having a scarcely noticeable connecting passage with the church. It was her idea also that the church and rectory be overgrown with ivy, and that there be a profusion of box hedge and rose trees about the church grounds. In fine, Mrs. Winship had delicately contrived to oversee all details of new St. Joseph's from the rich-toned bell in the steeple to the dozen costly cassocks and surplices for the altar boys, although at the solemnest feasts Goose Cove could never muster more than four servers. All this Mrs. Winship accomplished by devoted diligence and by her perfect accord with Father Eagan, the pastor.

Mrs. Winship had always been a prominent Roman Catholic. Indeed, with the coming-out of Emily, she had begun to be considered the leader of the more modern Catholic set. Her husband, although of no particular faith, had never interfered with his wife's religious ardor, and had put no obstacle to her upbringing of Emily. After the death of Cornelius Winship his widow gave a marble altar in his memory to her parish church in New York. She made this offering, as she made all her gifts, privately and with careful insistence that no worldly credit should come to her. Nobody in Goose Cove knew how much she had spent on new St. Joseph's. But Mrs. Winship and her daughter were local celebrities because they belonged to the class known to the villagers as "the rich people." There were many such scattered around the wooded shores of the fashionable harbor, but the Winships were the only practicing Roman Catholics.

At the Convent of St. Gudule, Mrs. Winship enjoyed a different distinction. Her cheeriness endeared her to almost all the nuns; and the Mother Superior

considered her a friend. In the world of men and women the Mother Superior had been a lady; and the aura of birth lingered with her in the asceticism of convent life. Mrs. Winship and the Mother Superior were wont to have long intimate talks on occasion. The woman of the world had an itching curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of the strange world of the Mother. She could see that the Superior had once been handsome; and the eager, healthful widow, who had experienced so many and divers emotions, often wondered how it would feel to pass her days immured.

Of the sensuous satisfaction her mother enjoyed in religion Emily Winship had little or none. To Emily religion was a duty she performed faithfully and without effort. Emily never thought of miracles, and did not pray for particular intentions. People used to say of Emily that she was much colder in feeling than her mother. She even looked cold, they said, as her father had looked. She had his blue eyes and light brown hair. She was taller than her mother, and would never have so robust a figure. Her cheeks flushed easily, but her manner was calm and deliberate, in contrast to her mother's restless, buoyant spirit. Emily had just reached twenty. Mrs. Winship was believed to be under forty, and only under. It was known that she had married when very young, and that she had had no child but Emily. Long ago captious people whispered that Mrs. Winship kept Emily dressed below her years in order herself to remain stationary in age. But Emily had a poise of more than twenty, so that Mrs. Winship sometimes appeared by comparison skittish with youth. The relations between the two were likewise curious. Mrs. Winship had a habit of saying cheerfully: "If I didn't have Emily as anchor I should be a terrible woman." Inwardly, she felt that whatever fallibilities she might be prone to, her religion would keep her straight in the path. Without religion, life would be a nightmare; with it she sailed a rough sea, but in a good craft. She re-

lied on religion for her guidance and strength from the moment she awoke till she fell asleep at night. In great and small things this faith held. If a brooch or a ring were lost or mislaid, a prayer to St. Anthony and an offering dropped in the iron-bound box at his shrine, never failed to bring it back to her. Far from making her a pale, dull devotee in the world, Mrs. Winship's religion enfranchised her for a social career. She drove away the thought as presumption, and yet there lived in her a deep sub-conscious assurance that she did her duty by the church and according to its laws. The legitimate satisfactions of her temperament, therefore, she drank without a qualm.

When the prayers after mass had been answered by the nuns in chapel, Father Eagan and the acolyte swept with loping strides out of the chancel to the sacristy. Through the doorway near the altar rail the noiseless nuns filed in broken order to go about the duties of the day. Mrs. Winship went out by the rear door that opened on the veranda, which ran the full width of the big building. At the farther side they saw a man leaning against the stair rail. He wore a golf suit.

"Emily, isn't that Mr. Ashbrooke?" asked her mother in a subdued tone.

"Yes."

The mother's furtive glance caught a faint flush in the girl's cheek.

"He said last evening," Emily continued, quickly, "he might walk across the fields from his place and meet me here, if I would drive him over to the Ailsa Club and play golf. The Kendricks are going to be there."

"Did you tell him you would?"

They stood before the main doors as if by tacit agreement.

"I told him you were a better match for the Kendricks, being so clever at the game, and——"

"Nonsense, my dear, if——"

"But aren't you, mother?"

"I suppose I do play better than you, Emily, but that's only because I don't play your way. If Mr. Ashbrooke wanted some one that played my way——"

"Why don't you join the party?"

"I positively can't, dearie. The Kendricks will look out for you, that is, if my punctilious little girl insists on a chaperon. I've got to see Father Eagan on a most important matter. And it will be half an hour before he's through his thanksgiving. He's very devout, you know."

"I don't think I shall go either."

"Not go, Emily?"

"I mean to play golf."

"Oh, I doubt whether golf's absolutely necessary to Mr. Ashbrooke's peace of mind, my dear. But take him over to the club as long as he has tramped all the way from Grey Towers, while his ponies eat their heads off in the stable. If you don't care to play you can talk with Mrs. Kendrick on the virtues of her husband. That is, *you* can listen. And, Emily——"

Mrs. Winship paused abruptly.

"Make haste, mother, he'll think we're discussing him."

"Then bring Mr. Ashbrooke back to our place. We'll have him take lunch——"

"Why, mother, Mr. Taylor hasn't——"

"He would have, my dear, if he knew that you——"

"Mother, I don't like things done for Mr. Ashbrooke, because I——"

"You little prude. Why, then, he shall be asked on my account. How does that please you? Now, see, I've made you jealous." Mrs. Winship laughed at Emily's mounting flush. Her pretty head tossed. Her deep brown eyes flashed and then fell into shadow. "Good-by, dear, make my excuses to Mr. Ashbrooke."

"How will you get back to the house, mother?"

"I'll telephone Jarvis to drive over."

"Good-by," Emily returned, glancing backward as she walked away.

Mrs. Winship was pressing her gloved finger against the button at the side of the door.

The exceeding youthfulness of her mother's figure never before seemed so marked to Emily.

II.

It was the third of June, but this raw, gusty night was more like one of October. A penetrating breath of salt swept up from the Sound recurrently.

Four weeks had passed, and the *Aspasia* still swung at anchor in her old harbor at Goose Cove. In the low, long house on the hill Rodney Taylor sat alone in the billiard room. He was drinking his *aperatif* and reading "Tom Jones." He was oppressed by the drag of the hour before dinner, by the shutting down of day, by the untimely chill in the air, and by the quick memory of four denied proposals in as many weeks. Of late, also, it had seemed to him that a change had come over Mrs. Winship. He found himself now absolutely in the dark about her. It is true that Rodney never attempted to thread the labyrinth of any woman's mind. And yet——

Upstairs in her room Emily was preparing for dinner. Half disrobed, she sat before the cheval glass, apparently pondering on what she should wear. Felicie, the maid, stood awkwardly aside. Felicie expected a visit during the dinner hour from her *fiancé*, an English valet of the neighborhood. Her impatience grew as the meditation of her mistress was prolonged. Felicie wondered as she gazed at the handsome, calm face of her mistress, her round, pale shoulders, her firm pale breasts, why the choice of gown for such a figure should require such deliberation. Then the suspicion crept into her mind: "She has begun to love him, perhaps." For Felicie had seen too much not to know that "Monsieur Ashbrouick" was pursuing a swift, tireless chase for the heart of Miss Winship. And yet, Felicie meditated, if she has begun to give way, that is no reason for being late for dinner and delaying a certain engagement.

In the mirror before which she sat Emily saw herself not as she now was, but as she had been in the afternoon of that epochal day. She was on the Hawks' Nest green at the Ailsa Club. She was leaning against the silver-gray rail fence. He was standing close to

her. He had never before been so close, she recalled her mental note. A massive oak tree rustled its leaves above them, making primeval music as accompaniment to the wild beat of her heart. Tired of playing, they stood watching a ploughman guide his team up a hill in the distance. Man and horses were specks that vanished each time they surmounted the hill. In a little while the specks would reappear and descend.

. . . He had been speaking to her—speaking as he had never spoken to her before. Rapid and many were his words, and her ears caught them with the music of the leaves above. And the music of the leaves was part of what he said. And the steady climb of the ploughman and his horses belonged to it. And the smell of the fresh earth, borne on the wind, mingled with the aroma of his breath, as his mouth poised beside her cheek, gave forth utterance. And the curve of his lip, his shining teeth, and her flaming cheeks were sister and brother to the brown earth that lay with bared veins in the wake of the husbandman.

. . . But the touch of his mouth to hers loosed her from the music of the leaves, from the flesh of the earth; and, as her head sank back in his embrace, her eyes caught a vision beyond the gray, fleeting clouds, and she closed them to lock beatitude in her soul.

"Mademoiselle désire quelque chose?" Felicie asked, as if suddenly distracted from some task.

Emily awoke from her reverie with a start. She rose from her chair and looked out the window aimlessly. In the failing twilight she barely discerned two figures, pacing briskly side by side, up and down the graveled path. In an instant she recognized her mother and Ralph Ashbrooke. She knew he was to dine with them. He had arrived early.

"I wonder if he's speaking to her now," she asked herself.

She turned away from the window, and bade Felicie to dress her quickly.

When Ralph Ashbrooke reached

Broadlawn, and Mrs. Winship came down at his request, he solicited further that she walk with him on the veranda.

"I came over early, Mrs. Winship," he said, nervously, "because I should like to ask you something."

She sent for a walking coat, and then led the way to the veranda. He broke into his subject warmly, but with care. They had not walked half the length of the house when Mrs. Winship suggested that they go down to the path.

"The noise of our steps on this wood irritates my nerves," she said, and added, smiling, "besides, the house is mined with servants."

At first they walked briskly to the water's edge, Ashbrooke fluent and crescently animated. She complained of the chill from the bay, and they then confined themselves to the walk before the house. Presently Ashbrooke seemed to reach a blind alley in his outpourings. For him there was a chasmic pause.

Mrs. Winship waited, and then spoke very softly: "I do not doubt, Mr. Ashbrooke, that you are sure in your feelings toward Emily. Are you quite sure she loves you? You are a devoted suitor, I know. Sometimes a girl is won rather than——"

"Of course, Mrs. Winship, I could not think the happiness of having Emily for my wife was to be gained without a hard struggle."

"She is only twenty."

"I know. I know. But Emily is more serious for her age than other girls. She has the calm of a woman. And I'm just thirty-three."

Mrs. Winship was surprised, but she continued in a deliberate, even voice:

"And you have lived since you were eighteen? Isn't that what you told me?"

"I have, Mrs. Winship, but I've kept my enthusiasm for life. I'm well and vigorous to-day; and when I look back, it seems that my real life did not begin until I met Emily two years ago."

"Since then?"

"Since then I have had one idea, to be worthy of her love."

"Naturally, you know, like all girls,

calm though she is, Emily must have illusions. I ought to be frank. There was a time when Ralph Ashbrooke had a certain reputation."

"Oh, the world always makes a man out better or worse than he is. Don't you think so?"

"Generally it does."

"At any rate, I have not deceived Emily. I have not painted myself a saint or a sinner. Some things die out of one's life, just as though they had never been. And as far as I may judge, if I'm not a romantic hero, at least I'm not a romantic villain. That sounds egotistic, maybe, but I mean it."

It was quite dark now. They were standing still. They looked each into the other's face, but felt rather than saw.

Mrs. Winship held out her hand.

"Ralph," she said, solemnly, "I feel sure you will be good to Emily, and I hope and pray you will both be very happy." She paused. "I shall be proud to call you my son."

Her hand was cold as ice to his touch. He bowed low, and whispered hoarsely:

"I shall be all I can to you and to her. Thank you, thank you!"

As he inclined above her hand she kissed him on the forehead. He felt the fever from her face. He wondered whether her cheeks were flushed.

"They are lighting the table candles," she said, looking toward the house. "We must go in."

She took his arm, as they walked ahead, hurriedly.

The all-important subject was not approached at dinner. Ashbrooke and Emily seemed to be in a state of subdued happiness. Rodney was taciturn and glum. After the coffee, Mrs. Winship begged to be excused, under plea of a nervous headache. Soon Ashbrooke stole away from Rodney, to be alone with Emily. Isolated in the billiard-room, Rodney sought refuge with "Tom Jones," Scotch whisky and cigars until one of the crew called to take him back to the *Aspasia*.

It was very late when Ashbrooke's coachman was announced to drive his master back to Grey Towers.

Emily crept upstairs, wearied with excess of joy. She tiptoed to the door of her mother's room, and pushed it open, noiselessly. A candle was burning on the marble room-altar that Mrs. Winship's pietism demanded.

"Is that you, Emily?" The voice came faintly from the bed.

Emily drew the door closed behind her, and glided to the bedside. She knelt on one knee.

"Why, mother, I thought Felicie or Berthe would be with you."

"I sent Berthe to bed. I do not need her."

"Can I do something for you, mother?"

"Rest, dear, is the only medicine. I've been overtaxing my strength, I fear." Mrs. Winship reached out her hand and smoothed the hair back from Emily's forehead. "Is mother's little girl happy?"

"Happy, and still— It will be terrible to go away from you, mother. How I dread—"

"Ralph's a good man, Emily, dear. He will—"

"I am sure he's good and kind, mother. I have tried to judge him calmly from the first. And yet, the first time I saw him I felt myself carried away—and the religion will make no difference, mother."

"Ralph assured me of that."

"He will be just as liberal as father was. I'll always be a good Catholic, you know, although, of course, not so good a one as you."

"Nonsense, child! Some people need more religion than others."

"He's been so splendid and honest," Emily went on, regardless of the train of thought. "He hasn't been half so wild as people have made him out to be. Why, mother, I know him almost as well as if I had lived his life."

"You do, Emily?" Her daughter, in enthusiasm, was a revelation to her.

"A woman divines things, doesn't she, mother? Or does she imagine them?"

"She does both, dear."

"And, oh, mother, I must tell you of the wonderful little romance Ralph had

when he was only sixteen. He told it to me because he thought I ought to know. But I mustn't bother you to-night; I forget. I'm so full of the subject." She laughed, delightedly.

"Tell it to me, Emily."

The girl rose, and sat on the edge of the bed, holding her mother's hand.

"He told it just as simply as though it had happened to some one else. Not a bit of conceit about him, or pride. He was going down the Rhine, from Cologne to May—May——"

"Mainz, Emily."

"How did you know?"

"That's a trip one frequently takes, from Cologne to Mainz. The French call it Mayence."

"Yes, that's the place. He was to meet his father at Mainz. It was his first tour of the Continent, and this was the first time he had traveled alone. He was awfully blue and homesick. Oh, awfully blue! He didn't know what to do with himself. It had been a long day's sail. When night came, although it was moonlight, the few people left on the boat were in the saloon. It was unseasonably cold. He sat up by the bow, staring ahead. The tears were near his eyes—he was such a boy, you know. He got into the shadow, where no one could see him. He was beginning to feel ashamed of himself. Then some one sat down close beside him. He gave a little start. It was a lady. He apologized. She apologized, saying it was so dark she could not see. She was going to move away. He kept up the talk, because he felt sure, from her accent, she was an American, and because he was just sick for the need of some one from home.

"Now, isn't it odd? She seemed to be in the same plight as he. She was traveling with her maid, to go to her mother, who had come as far as Mainz. They broke into a long talk, and, oh, mother, Ralph described the whole adventure so charmingly! They felt they knew each other, as though they had been friends for years. He fell madly in love with her on the instant. Think of it, he was only sixteen! And—and he kissed her—they kissed each other.

Are you listening, mother?"

Mrs. Winship's eyes were closed. Her voice came as from far away.

"They kissed each other."

"A boy's pure love kiss it was, and hers, too, was pure. He said he knew she was a good woman, from that kiss. He begged her to wait till he was twenty, so he could marry her. She had not told him how old she was. And soon they reached the dock at Mainz. It seems, you had to walk some distance up a hill then, to get to a carriage. Of course, she went with her maid. He followed, at a safe distance. It was so dark, and there was such a confusion of people that he suddenly lost track of her. He searched all the hotels in the city that night and the next day. . . . He never saw her again."

"She hadn't told him her name?"

"Nor he his? You see, the whole affair was so strange. They began at the end, as it were."

"What does he think became of her?"

"He believes she must be dead—or he would have met her again some time. He says when people meet and miss each other in the world like that, they always drift together again. He doesn't know why, but he feels that it is so. I say that she must have been much older than he, and that——"

"I am inclined to agree with Ralph, my dear. She must be dead."

Emily was frightened at the utter weariness in her mother's voice.

"You're all played out, mother. I ought not to have told you that long story. Good-night."

She leaned down and kissed her mother, long and tenderly.

"Good-night, darling," and her mother's arms tightened about her till her breath came hard.

When Emily had gone, when the door was firmly closed, Mrs. Winship got out of bed. She walked heavily to the door and turned the key.

Her whole body shivered in her nightdress. She slipped into a dressing-robe. She lighted two more candles on the little altar. She took her prayer-book, and, kneeling down,

crossed herself, with slow, tense gestures.

The main feature of the altar was a half-life-size statue, in marble, of the Sacred Heart. In the center of the bosom shone a gold heart, bleeding drops of gold. The arms were outstretched suppliantly.

She began to read Special Prayers in Time of Temptation. . . . Tears streamed down her face. She could no longer decipher the words.

"*De profundis clamavi ad te Domine,*" she moaned, repeating the one psalm she knew by heart. She moaned it again, and her sobs shook her, hysterically.

"Oh, God," she groaned at last, "make me a pure woman, make me worthy to—"

Suddenly, with a convulsive twitch, she fell over on her side, and lay shuddering on the rug beside her bed.

The candle first lighted sputtered and went out. The flames of the others flickered, and the wicks crackled faintly. The feet and folds in the garment of the Sacred Heart shone in their light. The face and the golden heart showed dimly.

III.

At about eight o'clock the next morning Rodney Taylor was sitting at the breakfast table on the veranda. Usually, Mrs. Winship was awaiting him. From time to time he glanced at his watch, mechanically. Rodney was not so placid as was his habit. He had in mind a certain purpose, to fulfill which required all the courage remaining after many defeats.

At length, Mrs. Winship stepped through the high window at his side and sat opposite him at the table.

"Good-morning, my dear—" Rodney began, in a tone of relief. But he paused, abruptly, as his shrewd eyes noted her worn, sad look.

"Good-morning, Rodney," she returned, listlessly, and rang the service-bell.

Rodney's brow shriveled into uncountable wrinkles, as he studied that

face he had never looked on but with affection and respect. It was drawn and pallid. The corners of the mouth drooped; the lips were thin and bloodless. The wonderful brown eyes lay hidden behind lowered lids of a leaden hue. Her skin no longer had the moist look. Her hair was pressed tight aslant her temples and about her ears. Usually it fluffed and curled winsomely. On her head was a plain, gray hat, that hardened the outlines of her face. And, to Rodney's eyes, she had never put on so unbecoming a gown. Gray it was, and severe, making her bosom look flat.

Mrs. Winship would take nothing but a cup of tea. Rodney would take no more. The Japanese boy servant pattered back to the kitchen.

Rodney had outlived breakfast. He was wondering by what apt turn he might break the gloomy silence. He had never seen her so dragged, so mysterious. Thoughts scurried wildly across his mind, yet none seemed fit for this moment's utterance.

They had but drunk their tea, when Jarvis, the coachman, drove around the corner of the house in a runabout. At once Mrs. Winship stood up, smoothing her gloves, which she had not removed. She was going, evidently. In alarm, Rodney asked, blurtily:

"Amy, what in the world is the matter?"

"You must excuse me, Rodney, please. I am not well. I have not been myself for a long time. Perhaps you have felt—"

"You're tired out, dear. Tired, that's all—"

"Tired, Rodney? It is enough, dear friend. I'm tired as a woman can be. Sometimes it seems ridiculous. If it were not I that is concerned, I think I might laugh."

A sad smile half-parted her lips, showing her small, even teeth. As she went on, her voice, low and tense, cast the words out feverishly:

"I'm tired of everything, Rodney—of myself, of the world. I am going to leave it—for a time at any rate. I shall enter the Convent of St. Gudule

for a year. I'll be taken as a boarder, you know, but I shall have to live in strict accord with the rule. Perhaps I shall always stay there—if I find peace. Oh, Rodney, how I envy you your content of soul! It has done me good often, and I am always grateful to you. . . . I am going to St. Joseph's now. This is the first Friday of the month, and there's mass in the church."

As she was turning away, he stepped sharply forward and seized her hand. Sympathy, affection, love, the desire of the man gleamed in his eyes, and gave his posture strength and daring.

"My dear Amy, you're surely not going to do any such mad—"

"I've been thinking it over for a month," she answered, calmly. She looked full into his eyes. Two tears streamed down her face.

"Have you no pity for me, Amy?" His voice faltered, but he gripped her hand more firmly.

"I don't deserve so good a man, Rodney."

His impulse was to seize her in his arms, to hold her back by main force, to mutter to her, between grinding teeth, that she belonged to him by all rights between man and woman. She must not go. His other hand shot up and caught her left wrist. The clinch of his muscular fingers made her wince.

"You hurt, Rodney; please don't," she murmured, and tears stained her face anew.

Jarvis, walking his horse, came around the house again. A wave of self-consciousness swept over Rodney. His hands dropped to his side.

"I am going to St. Joseph's," she said, aloud, as she walked to the steps. "Good-by, Rodney." She wished to give the idea of a conventional parting, for the benefit of the coachman.

Rodney followed her, automatically, and helped her into the carriage.

"I shall see you again to-day," he whispered.

"To say good-by?" She smiled, faintly.

"I shall see you to-day." His voice was low, dominating.

It startled her.

She was driven away, he gazing after her, as one looking at a stranger.

He watched the runabout wheel rapidly down the hill road till it was no longer visible. He stood for a moment irresolute. Then he strode back to the breakfast table and rang the bell excitedly.

The Japanese boy came running.

"Bring me Scotch whisky and soda," Rodney thundered.

The boy scampered away.

Rodney cut the end off a cigar, viciously, growling to himself. "Leave me, leave me? No, sir, I guess not! Not for St. Joseph or any other saint. . . . But I must be cool about it. I must plan the thing." He lighted the cigar. "I wonder where the deuce she ever got such an idea. . . . By Jove, I know!" He clapped his hands. "It's the priest, Father Eagan. Well, he left me out of his reckoning. I'll mix up his calculations. . . . But I'm too excited. I must sober down."

Puffing great clouds of smoke, Rodney poured himself a copious drink of Scotch.

All during the mass Mrs. Winship prayed rapturously. A certain feeling of security gradually permeated her being at the thought that retirement into the convent would yield her peace of mind for always. At the end of the mass there was benediction and exposition of the blessed sacrament. The church became lulled and drowsy with fumes of incense, and the rhythmic chant of the convent choir. She felt herself lifted to a plane beyond the fever desires and gnawings of a worldly life. Then the priest blessed the congregation with the eucharist, glowing white in the heart of the glittering, jeweled monstrance. Not a sound in the church, save the musical tinkle of the thurible chains and the threespaced moans of the altar gong. Mrs. Winship's head was bowed low over the pew, and the tears flowed consolingly from her eyes. Her body thrilled with religious ecstasy. She had a sense of newness and cleanness in her veins.

Her head swam. She could no longer feel the cloddiness of the cushion under her knees. She seemed to be floating upward. . . . The final hymn sounded to her like the choiring of angels.

A few moments after the boys had extinguished the altar candles, she knocked at the sacristy door.

Father Eagan, now in his soutane, answered her summons.

"I regret to disturb you, father," she said, "but I must see you at once."

"Let us go over to the house, Mrs. Winship."

The bareness of the parlor into which he conducted her was emphasized by its fittings. A marble-topped table stood in the center of the shiny, rugless floor. On the table lay a volume of "Lives of the Saints," bound in garish red and gold. Four horse-hair chairs stood on the several sides of the square room. A large cross of black wood, bearing the body of Christ in yellow plaster, hung on one wall. On the others were conventional prints of the Blessed Virgin, of St. Joseph and a photogravure portrait of Leo the Thirteenth.

Father Eagan pointed out a chair to Mrs. Winship. When she was seated, he closed the door, and sat at the opposite side of the parlor. He was tall and thin, but muscularly built. His narrow, long face was tanned by the country sun. His curly, close-clipped hair, scanty on top, was tipped with silver at the temples. He talked as if measuring every word, in a voice of a weight and timbre that he seemed to subdue in conversation.

"Father," she began, nervously, "you remember our talk at the convent that morning?"

"Perfectly, Mrs. Winship."

"You asked me to deliberate for a few weeks."

"Yes."

"I have thought and waited for a whole month."

"And now?"

"I am convinced that the only rest for me is in the convent. I shall go there for a year. I have spoken to Mother Superior, and she says—"

"I feel sure they would be glad to have you, Mrs. Winship, if they thought it for your good. But, after all, is it the wisest course for you to pursue? You have a daughter—"

"Emily is provided for. She will be married to Mr. Ashbrooke, in the fall, probably. Of course, I should go out for a fortnight on account of the wedding. The engagement will not be announced just yet, so we shall say nothing."

"I understand, Mrs. Winship. But don't you think it would be better to postpone this step until after Emily is safely married? She will never need you more than during the next few months. Besides, a woman of your social position and responsibilities cannot make so radical a departure suddenly. You must draw away from the world gradually. I know you have meditated long and seriously, yet our minds are so strangely made. Suppose that two weeks, or a month, after you had taken this step you should find that you had acted hastily?"

"I am as sure as one can be of anything, father, that it is the only thing for me to do. And I've prayed so hungrily for guidance."

"But you cannot leave Emily now. Think how dependent she and you have been. You have been more like sisters than like mother and daughter."

This feature of her purpose had long been a thorn to Mrs. Winship. The thought of drawing away from Emily at this time sickened her with cowardice. And yet, to be with her, constantly seeing, hearing, meeting—She dared not think the rest. It was appalling, impossible!

She remained silent for a moment, staring blankly before her. Then, rising quickly, she crossed the room and fell on her knees before the priest. As she poured forth her words, her voice, low and gasping, sank now and then into a sob. Tears no longer flowed. Her eyes were feverishly bright, her face flamed. She wrung her hands, distractedly. The priest made an attempt to raise her, but she stopped him.

"Let me kneel, father; let me kneel."

Let me talk to you as though in the confessional. Father, I must go now. Do you hear? Now, now. I am a bad woman. Not with sin of deed, father, but with sin of thought. It scalds my brain like an acid. I cannot sleep at night. I am afraid of myself in the day. It is always beckoning to me, tempting me. Sometimes I think it is good itself, but soon I recognize it as the old lure. . . . I have played with the world too long. My heart is soured. I'm sick of myself. I see others generous, warm, loving. I feel that I am selfish, icy. I have only appetites. All sweetness is gone out of my life. I am not worthy to be a mother. I fear sometimes that God will strike me dead!"

Her voice broke in a hysteria of sobbing.

The priest was alarmed at the frenzy into which she had whipped herself. He stood up, and, taking her under the arms, lifted her to his chair. He felt that he had never known this woman. To him she had always been a blithe, whole-hearted, prudent woman of the world. Behold, she had spilled her soul at his feet in a frenzy of repentance. Such remorse for a sin, only of thought, she had said, was an example to him, on whom God had shed such opportunities of grace. Also the question flashed across his mind involuntarily, what could be this sin that so upheaved her soul? He knew it was her practice to go to confession in New York.

She laid her arm on the back of the chair, and buried her face against it. The priest walked to the window, and stood watching the sexton mow the lawn, without seeing him. He remained thus for a few moments. When he turned toward her, she was sitting limply forward, her face hungry with hope.

"My dear child," he said, softly, laying his hand on her shoulder, "I shall answer you as well as I know how, and may God grant me His direction."

The priest's eyes closed, and he murmured a prayer in Latin.

"In all sincerity and wishfulness for your happiness, my child, I cannot ad-

vise you to go into the convent. I cannot let you go there; and yet I cannot keep you. You are a free agent. But you know the convent from the idealist's point of view. It is not your world, and you would stifle in it. Every detail of the life, of the surroundings, would grate on all you have had and known since you were born. Your place is in the world. You suffer there. You would suffer in the convent. Your temptation—no temptation can be barred by the convent lattice. Sometimes even Satan seems to have greater power within those walls, as if to try those that have escaped the world. Women are human there, as in the world. They toil and fret and question. It is the penalty of our earthly body.

"I am afraid you have become over-scrupulous about this sin of which you speak. So long as we make a fight against the most insidious temptation, God will not forsake us. And, if you were to go into the convent, all the good you do in the world would be lost. A holy woman in the world, by her example, can do work beyond the reach of priest or nun." He paused, as if in prayer. "Here is a rosary of the Seven Dolors of Our Lady. Keep it always with you, and pray on these beads when your heart grieves and clouds shadow your soul."

Mrs. Winship took the rosary, and stood up, as though hypnotized. The priest's face was white now, and drawn. Though he looked at her, she felt that his gaze was far away.

"Thank you, father," she murmured, and held out her hand.

Instead of taking it, he pressed his thumb against her forehead, making the sign of the cross.

"My child, I shall make a memento for you in each mass I say for a year. God bless you!"

Mrs. Winship stood for a moment, dazed. In the world she had sought as refuge there was no place for her. Life confronted her blankly.

She went out tottering, and down toward the church gate.

Rodney Taylor was striding up the roadway. He urged forward at sight

of her. When they met he took her step, walking beside her.

In a moment she said, as if speaking in a dream: "Rodney, Emily became engaged to Ralph yesterday."

"Is that so?" he asked, his thoughts on quite another subject.

"Nothing is to be said about it just now," she added.

They had proceeded some distance before he spoke.

"Amy," he murmured, conclusively, "I love you too much, and have loved you too long, to permit you to carry out this mad design of yours. Oh, why can't you see that our happiness lies together?"

"Rodney," she said, in a cold, strange voice, "you are so good and kind that I feel ashamed of myself in your sight."

"Nonsense, my dear. You're too sensitive, that's all. I've always thought your religion was over-exciting. Now, you will give up that wild idea about the convent, won't you, and you'll marry me—won't you, dear—because this time I don't ask you; I tell you that it is the only thing to do."

She looked up at his firm, set mouth and the blue eyes that she knew so well. Her lips trembled, as she groped for

words, and her quivering eyelids dropped tears.

"Yes, Rodney. And let us be married soon, and very—very quietly. And I shall love you," her eyelids dropped like a veil, while the words came with oathlike solemnity, "with all my body and soul. You shall love me, and keep me from my wild self. . . . I have only begun to know how much I can love."

"Amy, Amy," he groaned.

"Let us go away somewhere, dear, all by ourselves. Soon, you know. For I'm tired of the noise and the show. I want to learn to be worthy of you."

"Ah, Amy, this morning was worth living for!" Rodney sighed, with delicious pain.

They had reached the gate where Jarvis was flicking flies off the back of his impatient horse.

"Rodney, will you please tell Jarvis we shall walk home?"

When he returned to her, beaming, she looked into his face with eyes that shed tenderness, warmth, appeal.

"Amy," he whispered.

She touched his hand for an instant in response.

They walked along in silence.



REBUKED

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

"WE are but dogs," I cried, "poor beaten hounds
Whimpering and whining at the skirts of chance:
Fate, circus hag, laughs as she whips and wounds,
Making us, for our hire leap and dance,
Then, hungry, kicks us to our kennel thus,
With mumbled oath, when she has done with us."

Then one in rags, on whom no fortune smiled,
Looked sadly up, "We are not dogs," he said.
And silence fell. And I, a wanton child,
Who had dared grieve the Spirit, bowed my head
Ashamed; for, beating neath his travesty
I heard the wing of a God's Majesty.

FORTUNIO'S SONG

Translated from the French of Henri Lavedan

"THE name?" inquired the head-waiter, who stood importantly on guard before the reserved tables on the terrace of the Restaurant of France at the Trocadero.

"Baron Juillan," said the gentleman.

He motioned the lady that accompanied him to the place opposite him, and, after having unburdened himself of his hat and cane to the waiter, he sat down, his face meanwhile taking on the expression of illusory satisfaction habitual to every man that imagines he is going to enjoy his dinner.

One after the other, the lady drew off her *suede* gloves with easy grace, revealing two exquisite loyal, honest hands, that marked her at once as the Baroness Juillan, wife without reproach.

I maintain that the hands always tell the truth. A shrewd observer, with a turn for morals, would have felt sure at the sight of these hands that they were as good as they were beautiful, and that they had never sinned in thought or deed. White, long, rather thin, they were free from the effrontery of jewels; on the left hand alone a pearl shone softly between two sapphires, beside the wedding ring. Finally, from their melancholy inactiveness, that indefinable quality of being unused, that gave them a rather sad air, the shrewd observer would have guessed also that they had never mothered a child. In truth, nothing can give such joy to the fingers of a mother as curls to comb and bind on little heads, no matter of what color.

However, the Baroness Juillan had not been unhappy, and had she been directly questioned on the subject, she would not have been guilty of the injustice of complaining, although at the

bottom of her spirit of resignation lay a protest against life—a protest as discreet and reserved as she herself. Unlike the heroine of one of Turgenieff's most delicate fantasies, she would not go so far as to consider herself a superfluous woman. But she might have expressed her interior reproaches in the phrase: Life had not given her enough. Yes, that was it. Doubtless, she had experienced some joys—do not the most wretched gather crumbs? She had experienced happiness even—if it is meant by this term, immunity from illness, escape from great suffering and freedom from evil days—but she had hardly enjoyed sufficient happiness to make her feel an obligation of gratitude. Of things that are good here below, such as health, fortune, etc., poor, small blessings called perishable, she had had a share, but not too much, as well repeat the phrase, not enough. She had been twice married and each time fairly well, without, however, securing that for which one seeks in vain in this mousetrap of a world. M. d'Arçay, her first husband, had loved her while deceiving her during a period of nine years. He became sickly at an age when he showed serious intentions to reform, and death took him at his word.

Baron Juillan, her second husband, a friend of her first, whom she had married out of goodness of heart, and because he pleaded with her, and also out of esteem, because he had never made love to her during the sickness of his friend, had not brought to her that famous happiness so much talked of. With the second husband, as with the first, she could easily recall a few happy

half hours here and there; but, after all, in both cases, it was a very exiguous happiness. From this resulted her vague and dreamy vanity, that gave her thirty-six years a troubling charm, that made her seem insensible to the trivial distractions of daily life, such as she seemed this evening on the terrace, still, her hands crossed, and casting about her an autumnal glance that fixed itself nowhere.

Meanwhile, the baron studied the bill of fare attentively, while there fell from his lips such words as:

"*Merlan*—no; *Tournedos Rossi*, no. *Losanges de veau* * * * ah, that's not bad!"

Whether one gets married through the offices of zealous people who assume that they know "whom you should marry," because they saw you at birth, whether one takes the matter in one's own hands, disdaining the interference of others, it always seems, once the misfortune is consummated, that out of simple purpose the most contrary natures have been joined for a lifelong alliance. Juillan was an example in confirmation of this law, and no one could be more unlike the baroness than the baron. After a very stormy youth, Juillan decided to subside in his forty-second year; and he offered to the widow, Madame d'Arçay, what was left of his life, which she accepted. His was the amiable pepper and salt philosophy of people that have tasted all things, the temperateness of a diner who has behind him a past of indigestions. He found life good, not exactly as he formed it, but as it might be made by adaptation. Far from complaining within himself, as did the baroness, of the parsimony with which earthly pleasures are doled out to us, he declared himself, if not satisfied, at least content, considering himself lucky that with his well-tried stomach he could still get a little happiness out of half a bottle. So the baron lived in healthy, comfortable leisure, spending six months in Paris and six months in the country, where he did much good. The good country folk received him so enthusiastically that he gradually became persuaded

that he was interested in agriculture. In a word, he was an excellent husband, causing his wife only such worries as added a little to his comfort. Moreover, theirs was a pleasant home, despite the differences of their characters and their tastes. They had both reached that second period, which might be called the period of renunciation, in which neither takes the trouble to dominate the other. Age and also, perhaps, disillusionment, lead married people to a kind of armistice of reason, that eventuates in lasting peace. They esteem each other then in living by a philosophy that has not been easily acquired; resignation becomes gentleness, condescension. And they breathe an atmosphere of reciprocal pity, calm and indulgent, each rejoicing that they can be unhappy in so supportable a fashion. For eighteen months the relations between the Juillans had been precisely these.

After having spent a few hours on the *Champ de Mars*, and after having indulged their curiosity as well as their lassitude from the English section to Machinery Hall, they were retracing their steps through the picturesque but inevitable Street of Cairo, when they decided to dine at the Exposition and remain there during the evening. The place they selected was familiar to them, because they had frequently dined there. They liked it because it was well-kept; but, most of all, for the magnificent view to be had from the terrace. To speak accurately, one dined, perhaps, more on the view than on the dishes offered. And, to be sure, they must have been very geniuses of cooks that had contrived, designed, prepared and cooked, for the joy of the whole world, all those beautiful decorative dishes of architecture, the domes, the fountains of luminous sauces and, at last, that supernatural *croquenbouche* in iron—the Eiffel Tower!

Night was coming on, and at this moment the tower, from top to bottom, was outlined against a background of somber sky by a thousand points of fire, like one of the palaces of childhood—don't you remember?—that used to

glitter through pinholes pierced in the shade of the family lamp. On the right, the pavilions of the Argentine Republic were lit up with red and green phosphorescence that gave the buildings a likeness to the Carthaginian houses in holiday time, such as our imagination pictures them in reading "Salambô." On every side the foliage was sprinkled with lights, from every direction enormous blades of electric light crossed on the firmament like swords of arch-angels, while below, the fountains of the Trocadero irrupted with the constant noise, mysterious and redoubtable as the groaning of a mob.

To enjoy properly a certain kind of spectacle one must subject one's self to the silence it imposes from the moment it begins to speak. Whether from an impulse to observe this rule, or simply because they were tired, the baron and the baroness, from the beginning of their repast, had been silent, except for a few brief words, those insignificant phrases that are simply utterance, scarcely even attempts at thought, but which almost always accompany, and, as it were, punctuate, our most precious and most intimate reveries. Sitting face to face, their knees almost touching under this little table, as small and narrow as that of Manon Lescaut, they ate, drank and observed. At intervals one would smile on pouring for the other some St. Galmier water. That was all. How many married people there are who have no more intimate manner of being together!

The terrace on which the Juillans dined was occupied by about fifty tables, engaged in advance and taken since six o'clock. On a raised platform in the rear, seated in a semi-circle, as if presiding over the tables, an orchestra of Hungarian women played waltzes and polkas in such insistent *tempo* that they almost obliged one to swallow to the down beat. Their bows, that looked as if they had been made out of their pale Viennese hair, rose and fell cadently, as they sawed nervously selections of enervating and banal sentimentality. One heard them with a certain pleasure, but without seeming to

listen. They had been playing about three-quarters of an hour, and had exhausted about half of their lively and excited repertory, when, by contrast, doubtless, they began with a caressing slow movement, "Fortunio's Song."

At the very first bars both the baron and his wife looked up, saying simultaneously:

"Ah, the song!"

The baron, who was just finishing his berries, laid his spoon down noiselessly, pushed his plate away, and, leaning back in his chair quite motionless, his gaze at once vague and fixed, he looked down below, somewhere between the second and third platform of the Tower.

This is what he saw:

"If you believe" . . . It was fifteen years ago, one summer night—what a beautiful summer night it was that year! In a large pleasant room, mauve and silver, piled with chairs of all shapes, very cosy for talking, for being silent, for singing, laughing or crying—for tears had been shed in this beautiful mauve room. He himself, the imbecile, in seeking to . . . "that I shall tell" . . . Standing before him in a long, soft garment of rose-colored *crêpe de chine*, Lucette Iris, the little star of the *Ivresses-Parisiennes* Theatre, sang softly as she fixed him with her glance, her lips hardly parted. . . . "whom I dare love" . . . To please herself she had dressed her hair high, as in the time of Deirria, because she knew how well that style suited her, and on her bare arms she wore black silk gloves, through which her white flesh shone . . . "I could not" . . . While she sang there, so softly, so vanishingly, in her little tender voice, he suddenly seized her in his arms and pressed her so ardently that the wonder is she had any breath left to continue . . . "for an empire" . . . Soon he felt that . . . the song lasted six months . . . "tell you her name" . . . Six mad months! So long ago and it seems as if it were yesterday. He was not married then . . . why, he was exactly thirty-

one at the time . . . and it is all done with now.

"And Lucette? Where is she? Who knows? Who can say? After all, what items in life we are! And, yet it is sweet to remember those days. The night she sang that song so prettily was perhaps the one time in my life that I really loved. Poor Lucette! I must have her picture somewhere in the house. When I get home I'll look for it."

Meanwhile the Hungarian women played on as Juillan dreamed . . . *"And she is fair, fair as the wheat of the field."*

On the other hand, the baroness had also begun to muse at the opening of the song. She withdrew her lips from the rim of the glass out of which she was drinking tastelessly, and her eyes fixed themselves off there on the glittering buildings of the Argentine Republic.

This is what she saw:

"From the pain that love ignored" . . . It was a winter's night, fifteen years ago, a winter's night—what a rare winter's night that year! It was at the *Ivresses-Parisiennes* Theatre, she and d'Arçay, her first husband were ensconced in the shadow of a box. They had been married six months . . . *"causes us to suffer"* . . . Lucette Iris, the famous little diva, was on the stage, charming, rose-fresh from head to feet, and suddenly began to sing, her lips barely parted, "Fortunio's Song"—which she interposed in her part because she knew how well she sang it. *"My soul is"* . . . She recalled her wave of feeling . . . *"torn"* . . . in hearing the sweet romance that night as she sat beside Jacques, and that strange, unexampled dread that swept through her being, making her deliciously weak and shattered . . . *"to death"* . . . They had not waited till the end of the performance, and, in the carriage that rolled home leisurely, they had sat silent and grave, holding each other's hand understandingly . . . *"But I love too much"* . . . How far away those memories. How single and alone that one night! As she reflects,

she is convinced that it was on this single occasion that she had known the secret dream of love so often desired—yes—that night at the little theatre—with her first husband . . . *"that I should tell."*

"Poor Jacques! He wasn't such a bad fellow . . . I think I have one of his pictures, taken at the time we were married . . . *"to die for my love"* . . . "I must find it one of these days . . . *"without telling her name."*

The violins finished amid a burst of applause. The baron and the baroness, reaching almost simultaneously the end of their retrospective reveries, looked at each other again in recognition. For some moments they contemplated each other in silence, he, inwardly reproaching himself for his recollection of the love of the past; she, accusing herself interiorly of a serious injury to her second husband in taking such pleasure out of the memory of the first. They both looked grave and, as it were, ashamed. The good couple did not dream that they owed themselves no reproach and that their accounts stood balanced.

They remained at the table almost five minutes longer, talking to each other in a low voice and with a delicacy of consideration not exactly conjugal. They were suddenly stirred, as if the recollection of the dear follies through which they had just been living again, had left in passing a little love in the glance, in the voice, in the heart. Their eyes shone, and they were surprised to find themselves calling each other by the intimate "thou." At length the baron asked for his bill and paid without reading it. They rose quickly and disappeared.

Were they in love with each other that night? I cannot say, but assuredly they were in love, and ardently. . . . And on account of a simple song. Which proves that, if well combined, the regret of two, even the remorse of two, may sometimes afford—not for long, it is true—a little love and a little happiness.

DE WAY T'INGS COME

By Paul Laurence Dunbar

DE way t'ings come, hit seems to me,
 Is des' one monst'ous mystery;
 De way hit seem to strike a man,
 Dey ain't no sense, dey ain't no plan;
 Ef trouble sta'ts a pilin' down,
 It ain't no use to rage er frown,
 It ain't no use to strive er pray,
 Hits mortal boun' to come dat way.

Now, ef you's hungry, an' yo' plate
 Des' keep on sayin' to you, "Wait,"
 Don't mek no diffunce how you feel,
 'T'won't do no good to hunt a meal,
 Fu' dat ah meal des' boun' to hide
 Ontwell de devil's satisfied,
 An' twell dev's some'p'n by to cya've
 You's got to ease yo'se'f an' sta've.

But ef dey's co'n meal on de she'f
 You needn't bothah 'roun' yo'se'f,
 Somebody's boun' to amble in
 An' 'vite you to dey co'n meal bin:
 An' ef you's stuffed up to de froat
 Wid co'n er middlin', fowl er shoat,
 Des look out an' you'll see fu' sho
 A 'possum faint befo' yo' do'.

De way t'ings happen, uhuh, chile,
 Dis worl's done puzzled me one w'ile;
 I's mighty skeered I'll fall in doubt,
 I des' won't try to reason out
 De reason why folks strive an' plan
 A dinnah fu' a full-fed man,
 An' shet de do' er cross de street
 F'om one dat raaly needs to eat.

ONLY A CLOWN

By H. C. Chatfield-Taylor

A PARISIAN circus had been performing at Nancy for a week. It was Saturday night, and the tent was crowded with spectators. In the sawdust ring glittering riders guided their horses through the intricacies of the opening quadrille, the band played, the crowd applauded. In the gloom above the people's heads the great canvas roof swayed in the night breeze, and the flaring lamps shed flickering light upon the faces of the crowd and the performers in the arena.

Standing in the entrance of the ring, almost hidden by the tinselled curtain separating the stables from the main tent, was the clown. The chalk and the carmine paint concealed his anxious look, but the twitching of his eyes betrayed his nervousness. He glanced along the tiers of spectators until his eye fell upon the blue uniform of a *chasseur* in the third row of seats. Under a military cap, ornamented with the silver stripes of a captain, was a dark face, with a waxed mustache and two little pig-like eyes. The clown started as he saw this man.

"How I hate him!" he muttered, and a quick sensation, cold like a rush of water, shot through his body.

The quadrille was over. The clown jumped aside as the horses bounded past him.

The band played again, the workmen raked over the sawdust with their long rakes, a horse was led in, and a man in tights and spangles rushed into the ring and smilingly bowed to the spectators. The ringmaster's whip cracked. It was the clown's cue, and he sprang, tumbling, rolling, laughing, into the

arena. He jibed and played his pranks and turned his somersaults, but his acting was mechanical. He saw only the dark face of the *chasseur*.

In the dressing-tent a group of tumblers were awaiting their turn to enter the ring—huge, brawny fellows with their muscles splendidly developed. They laughed and chaffed one another, and one of them executed a couple of handsprings on the ground for practice. Seated on a drumhead next the side of the tent was a girl; her black gauze skirts were spread out against the canvas wall like a large fan, and she sat with her legs carelessly crossed. She wore a bunch of roses on her dress, and her arms rested lightly against her hips. She had curving lips, and her skin was clear and white. Her eyes were of an indefinable color—a sort of a blue-gray, set close together—and her black hair fell in low curls on her forehead. She took a rose from the bunch on her breast and played with it carelessly. Her thoughts pleased her, for she smiled and scattered the petals of the rose upon the ground.

There was a jangling noise of bells. The girl looked up. A horse trotted into the tent, and his spangled rider followed him. The troop of tumblers passed out, and from the ring came the distant sound of clapping hands and the strains of music. Then the clown came in. He saw the girl, and went toward her. He stood for a moment watching her. Finally he spoke.

"Did he give you those roses, Nanette?" he said, his lips trembling with anger.

The girl glanced up. She smiled

roguishly, and threw the flower in her hand at his face. He dodged the rose and seized her arm.

"Answer me!" he cried.

"Yes," she replied, coldly. "He gave them to me. You never give me roses."

"And you dared take them!"

The girl threw herself back against the tent wall, and laughed. "So Jacques is jealous," she said. "I am glad of it."

The clown folded his arms. Then he spoke in a dry, jerky voice. "Don't banter with me, Nanette," he said. "I know it all. I followed you last night. I saw you meet him there, down by the river. I was near you, crouching behind the wall. I heard the promise you gave him. To-night you meet him; to-night."

"Well, what of it?" Nanette asked, dryly.

The clown did not hear her words. He covered his face with his hands, and spoke wandringly. "I hear the rattle of spurs now, and the clanking of his sabre on the stones," he said. Then he laughed a hollow little laugh. "It's a dream, isn't it, Nanette? Tell me it isn't true. Tell me you love me still."

Nanette looked up into his face. Her eyes flashed cruelly. "I don't love you," she said. "You are only a clown."

He could not speak. He stood immovable, thinking of her pitiless words; thinking of the time when he first loved her. He was a student in the Latin quarter then, with friends and hopes, but he gave up his career to follow her. It was three years since he had become an outcast. During those years he had loved her as only a reckless, impulsive man can love. For her sake he had taken the scoffs and laughter of the world; for her sake he had played the pranks of a clown. He had come down to her level, but it was to please her, to be with her, that he had sunk so low. Now she despised him for it. He was no longer jealous of this woman; the misery she had caused him made him loathe her, and cruel, merciless hatred burned in his heart. His black eyes flashed revengefully. The girl returned

his glance. Her expression was cold and fearless.

"God have mercy on your soul," he cried, hoarsely. Then he turned away and left her.

She shrugged her shoulders and smiled. Then she took another rose from her breast and played with it.

The troop of brawny tumblers came back, panting and heated from their exercise. Nanette left her seat on the drumhead and smoothed her gauze skirts. Then she glanced in the bit of broken mirror hanging on the center-pole, and deftly arranged a ruffled lock of hair.

A milk-white Arab horse stood in the ring. The tinselled curtain was drawn aside, the band played, and Nanette tripped lightly to the center of the arena. She smiled and kissed her hand to the audience, and she glanced to the third row of the seats. The *chasseur* caught her eye, and she waved her hand to him. Jacques, the clown, stood by and saw the gleam of pleasure in the little pig-like eyes.

The ringmaster caught Nanette's foot in his hand, and she leaped to the horse's back. The musicians played a lively air, the whip cracked, the white horse cantered gently around the ring, and she danced gracefully on the padded saddle. There was a glow of rich color in her cheeks, and her eyes beamed excitedly. Each time she passed the *chasseur* she smiled. Jacques tumbled and rolled in the sawdust, his grotesque trousers flapped comically as he executed his somersaults, and the quaint grimaces of the whitened face brought peals of laughter from the audience. He was acting the part of a clown, but hatred rankled in his heart, and beneath the chalk and carmine paint was the face of a cruelly wronged man. He had but one desire—revenge.

The white horse ceased cantering and walked slowly around the ring. Nanette, flushed and panting, smiled at the *chasseur*. Then she glanced admiringly at her splendid shoulders and at the roses on her breast. She crossed her feet coquettishly and patted the neck of the Arab horse. Jacques, the clown,

laughed and jibed with the ringmaster, and tossed his pointed cap into the air. He played his pranks, and won the applause of the spectators—then the paper balloons were brought and distributed to the grooms. The whip cracked. The white horse galloped on again. "Hoopla! hoopla!" shouted Nanette, as she sprang lightly to her feet and danced and pirouetted as before.

Jacques sullenly took his balloon and mounted his painted tub. Opposite him was the *chasseur* officer, and each time Nanette passed him he saw the responsive glance of satisfaction in his dark face. The clown thought of the misery the faithless girl had caused him, and he almost pitied the soldier who had won her treacherous love.

Nanette passed him again. She was so near that her gauze skirt brushed against his face. "Have I the courage?" he sighed. He glanced up, and the lamps above him flared irregularly; the audience seemed swimming confusedly about his head, and the perspiration stood in cold drops on his forehead.

His lips trembled. His hand fumbled in his baggy pocket. He looked over his shoulder after Nanette. She had reached the first balloon. She gave a quick shout as she jumped, and he heard the crackle of the bursting paper. The white horse cantered on. Would she look at him this time, he asked himself. He saw the little eyes of the soldier gleam again, and the smile of pleasure on his lips. "God forgive me!" he gasped. He raised his balloon, and Nanette leaped in the air.

A loud report rang through the tent. Women screamed, men hurried aghast to the lifeless form upon the ground. The white horse galloped on, alone. A few roses were scattered on the ground, and the smile of pleasure was still on the girl's lips, but the gauze skirts were rumpled and blood trickled slowly over the sawdust in dark red pools.

A *gendarme* quickly seized the clown. Jacques smiled as he handed him the smoking pistol.

"Take me," he said. "I'm only a clown."



KINSHIP

PRONE on the warm, brown earth I lie,
 Face downward in the autumn-scented grass;
 Full-throated melodies of morning pass,
 The drowsy afternoon drones by—
 With outstretched arms this pageantry
 Of life I strive to clasp against my heart,
 I whisper: "Thou and I, good earth, are part
 Of some wide Self—we shall not die."
 Then by the voices of the secret pine,
 By sun and sky, the yearning breasts of night,
 Home-songs of birds, the white-souled stars ashine,
 By all the pain and passion of the sea,
 I pray the pure, strong Cause of Life and Light
 To grant me soul-sight of eternity.

EMERY POTTLE.

LORD BELLAMY AND HIS VALET

By Roy Horniman

LORD BELLAMY sat up in bed, ashy pale, and gazed aghast.

For a moment he wondered if he were really awake, or still dreaming, but the tide of sunlight, checked by the outside blinds, and the rumbling of the traffic, convinced him that he had awaked to a misfortune crushing and unexpected.

"Leave—this day month? Give notice?" he babbled, disconnectedly, in his agitation.

The man before him, typical, some forty years of age, a sphinx in service, merely added to what he had already said:

"If convenient to your lordship."

This was simply the etiquette of his position, a form as indispensable in his own eyes as the "yours obediently" which a superior places above his signature when writing to an inferior.

As applied to the circumstances, it sounded silly in the ears of the unnerved aristocrat.

"What have I done?" he had almost murmured piteously; but being a man of some considerable resources and swiftness of purpose, he retorted instead:

"Certainly not. Don't let me hear you mention the subject again."

The attempt to carry the matter with a high hand failed.

"I should wish your lordship to remember this day month that I gave you notice this morning." He placed the table with the tray bearing rolls and coffee a little nearer to the bed and then withdrew as was his wont till his lordship should see fit to rise.

Left alone, Lord Bellamy gazed blankly at the green treetops, gilt with

sunshine, just visible beneath the sunblinds.

He had gazed at the same treetops any morning during the season for the last twenty years, and he trusted to gaze so for another twenty if Heaven only spared him strength and spirits to continue for so long a period his aimless and useless life.

It might almost be said that before this he had never known real trouble, and for a moment something suspiciously like a sob caught in his throat, reminiscent of a sensation unexperienced since his childhood and associated with the absence of his nurse for an undue period.

He must think. He had great faith in his powers of solution by thought, and with a nice habit of logic the first thing he did was to try and remember what had happened to others under a similar circumstance, and how they had acted.

After some twenty minutes' reflection he gave it up. He could only remember men who had given their servants notice. Whether true or not, people always put it in this way.

His imagination led him to the time when perhaps the thing should have really happened.

He was alone; and apart from the mere terrifying thought of a new man, he had been unable to suit himself with a successor. He was without a servant.

He passed his hand across a brow on which the drops of perspiration had gathered. It was the day after the man had left, and he was waiting to get up. In his agitation the simple process became involved.

He gazed helplessly toward the heavy

presses where his unlimited wardrobe lay. Nerving himself, and having decided on a clothing programme for the day, he advanced and withdrew—as he thought—a pair of dark, striped trousers, a waistcoat and a frock coat. At least, folded up, this was what the portions of clothing visible suggested.

He found himself provided with a pair of riding breeches and a smoking jacket. Evidently everything had to be lifted off till the right article was reached, and perhaps it would be necessary to repeat this process down through half a dozen shelves unless completely versed in the mystery.

His brain reeled at the idea.

Such was the future troubles to which Lord Bellamy's imagination strode.

His mind was made up. At all costs the man must stay, and as he came to this decision, he began to feel some return of cheerfulness.

There was a knock at the door.

Lady Bellamy entered the room, very beautiful and fresh, in a riding habit.

She was his partner, although hardly the sharer of his joys, and certainly with no intention of sharing his sorrows. They were quite happy, and quite disunited. They had children somewhere, either stowed away upstairs, or down at Bellamy Park. All that Lord Bellamy knew was that he had begun to hate his heir as one who had all those properties and pleasures to come which he himself was almost halfway through the enjoyment of.

He and his wife were lunching somewhere with somebody, and on the occasion of something which elevated it into a function. She had come in to remind him. Lord Bellamy grimly waited till she had finished explaining herself. What would she say when she heard the news?

"Harris has given notice."

"Oh, my dear boy, I'm so sorry. If breaking in a new man is anything like breaking in a new maid, your season will be spoiled."

"You don't seem to realize, Mabel," answered her husband, indignantly, "Harris has been with me—ahem! sev-

enteen years." His lordship was sensitive about his age.

"I suppose he has saved enough to retire. The pickings of seventeen years will buy him a very nice public house."

"For goodness' sake, don't be so unfeeling!"

"Perhaps he wants to get married, or perhaps it's only a fit of temper."

"Temper? Harris was never in a temper in his life. He is a thoroughly well-trained servant."

"Well, if he wants to go, he must go."

"He shan't go—by God, he shan't!"

Lady Bellamy looked at her husband in amazement. The superlative mood was hardly characteristic of him.

"My dear Harry, are you ill?"

"No, but you don't know what it means. It's like losing valuable property. He knows all about me. Why, do you know, when—" He checked himself. His wife was hardly the person to tell how much Harris did know about him. Not that she was capable of the least throb of jealousy. There had never been any question of emotion between them.

Later, Lord Bellamy emerged into the broad sunlight of Park Lane. At a distance of twenty yards he looked almost a youth. Every yard nearer the artificiality of the edifice grew more apparent, and close to he looked every day of his age.

It was the face—jaded, and with the lines, the signs and symbols, of a life of pleasure—which gave the lie to the hypocrisy of the really well-preserved figure. Every garment that he had put on had told him how much he owed to Harris. He already saw himself in the hands of a new man, looking fifty, neither he nor his servant able to capture that intangible something, the priceless gift of the faithless Harris.

He walked down Piccadilly with a tread almost heavy when compared with his usually buoyant step.

Before the evening many a friend had been bored with what was gradually reducing Lord Bellamy's mind to a condition of absolute horror.

He had taken the addresses of the

numerously recommended. Perhaps Providence would be kind and send as from heaven a miraculously suitable creature.

So the days went by, and they brought with them a host of applicants, more than one suggested by the incomparable Harris himself, who—true to the value which his master set upon him—was morbidly anxious in his own passive manner, to provide as good a substitute as might be possible. Unobtrusive, he had yet never undervalued himself; and, but for the growing misery in Lord Bellamy's face, would have agreed complacently with his master that it was unlikely he would ever come across such a treasure again.

Nothing at all near to Lord Bellamy's idea of a gentleman's gentleman put in an appearance.

As the time of his bereavement approached he quite lost his head.

A brilliant idea, however, struck him, which for some hours gave him hope.

He would raise Harris' wages—a course simple and obvious to most minds, but the last to occur to Lord Bellamy. If necessary, his face twitched with pain at the notion—he would double his wages.

Albeit the idea plucked at his heart-strings—indistinguishable from his purse-strings—he gave a happy little laugh at the solution of the difficulty having been found, even though late in the day.

"I suppose it's what the scoundrel wanted," he said, and rang the bell.

The scoundrel, sleek, imperturbable, appeared with a swiftness which, had Lord Bellamy not been alone, might have suggested eavesdropping. He declined Lord Bellamy's offer, and explained that he did not intend to remain in service.

It was the last straw; and, left alone, Lord Bellamy shed tears of rage and disappointment.

Intangibly, he himself hardly conscious of the process, a scheme evolved itself in his mind by which Harris might be forced to stay where he was. The idea was so daring that, suddenly realizing its feasibility, the blood surged

for one moment to his brain, nigh choking him, and then ebbed, leaving him chill and trembling. Whatever his faults, he was, or had been till then, a man of honor, and the hesitation arose from a very natural doubt as to whether what he was about to do—considering that it was directed against a mere servant—would be dishonorable.

He crossed the room to a corner where there was a small safe let into the wall. He unlocked it, and drew out a dark brown leather case. Opening it, there lay before him six diamond buttons—as a jeweler would have said, very fine, indeed.

He remembered that he had intended any time since his marriage, to have them made into something for his wife, but somehow it had never happened—the giving of gifts not being of frequent occurrence in his life.

He had not seen them for months. For this reason they would suit his purpose.

That evening Lord Bellamy left the card table at his club early. This was the more remarkable as he had been winning heavily. He stole into his house like a thief, and gained his own room unperceived. It was an hour at which he was the last person the members of his household would have expected to see.

Putting on a pair of silent shoes he stole gently toward the kitchen stairs. His heart beat so loudly that he thought for a moment it must have alarmed the house. He met no one.

Silently he passed through the door which led to the servants' quarters, and, closing it behind him, stood and listened. The room he was making for was up a short flight of stairs. He began to ascend softly. He found the door open, but to his dismay, discovered that he had no matches. Then a chill struck at his heart as he heard some one approaching. He stood erect with a haughty excuse already on his lips. It sounded like Harris. The footsteps passed, and he breathed again.

He drew up the blind and the moonlight filled the room, showing him what he wanted.

A portmanteau, one he had himself given Harris, lay at his feet with the keys in it. In a twinkling his lordship popped the case containing the diamond buttons into the half-filled portmanteau, taking care that it should be well covered. Two minutes later he was back in his own room.

Harris was not rung for that evening, and next morning he rose to perform his last day's service to Lord Bellamy with a refreshed and unsuspecting mind.

Having drawn up the blind and opened the window, he took from his mantelpiece a cabinet photograph of such kind as domestic servants love, and looked at it earnestly. The impassive, wooden features softened, the hard, blue, shaven lips relaxed, and with humid eyes he pressed it to his lips.

Lady Bellamy, with a woman's instinct, had placed her finger on the psychological center of the situation. The imperturbable Harris was in love. True love it must have been, for the path of his romance from that moment grew impassable. The fates were largely assisting Lord Bellamy, for Harris, noticing the half-filled portmanteau, finished packing it ere he left his room, and by a singular coincidence locked it.

Thus it was that with a little push forward from his lordship, Harris helped himself to ruin.

The evil nobleman lay in his bed below, wide awake. He had thrown himself heart and soul into the plot, and had lost his night's sleep. His servant, however, found him with his face invisible and the clothes pulled up to an unusual height. Still, the attitude did not suggest insomnia, for Lord Bellamy was a good actor, as was also shown by the convincing yawn with which he opened his eyes and pretended to awake.

"I understand your lordship has engaged Mr. Shackleton, whom I suggested."

"Yes, Harris, yes. You are very inconsiderate, but if you must go, you must."

"I think your lordship will find Mr. Shackleton quite sufficient, and when I

have shown him what is expected of him there will, I am sure, be nothing to complain of."

"Let us hope so, let us hope so, Harris," said Lord Bellamy with another yawn, as if both Harris and the subject bored him; but he chuckled inwardly. His sensations were Machiavellian, and he found them exhilarating.

"After all," he thought, "there is something in work. It must be a good thing to have something to occupy one's mind."

Later in the day he knocked at a door in Bond street.

A page boy opened it, and on seeing Lord Bellamy, immediately admitted him.

"Mr. Quarry in?" he asked.

For answer the boy showed him into a room on the first floor.

A fair man, with a colorless expression, rose from a desk near the window. This was Mr. Quarry, the celebrated private detective, purveyor of circumstantial evidence to the aristocracy, a great artist, who could paint white facts to make them look black, and black facts to make them look white, who could conjure divorce from out of the most idyllic homes, who could produce marriage from the most improbable combinations.

There was nothing obsequious in his manner to Lord Bellamy. He shook hands with him in a way which matched his almost vacuous expression.

Lord Bellamy sank into a chair, took a puff at his cigarette, and waited for the other to begin, knowing perfectly well that he would do nothing of the kind. The other did not begin, but walked across to the empty grate and leaned back against the chimneypiece in a manner which suggested a total lack of intelligence.

"It's not a woman this time," hazarded his lordship.

Although fully as surprised as Lord Bellamy meant him to be, the eyes remained staring mistily before them as if what he had heard had hardly reached his understanding. He had, however, an extraordinary capacity for making

his clients babble recklessly. For himself the A, B, C of his art was silence.

"You see, my servant, who has been with me for—it doesn't matter how many years—quite a long time, has given notice. I've always thought him perfectly trustworthy till to-day."

"Till to-day," said Mr. Quarry, using the same inflection as Lord Bellamy, as if it were a most important point.

"On looking for a few knickknacks in my safe, I found some had gone."

"Anything in particular?"

"Yes. Six diamond buttons—belonged to my grandfather. From what has come to my knowledge, I think perhaps that, notwithstanding his long services, Harris may have become tempted and——"

Lord Bellamy paused. The punishment of guilt is as much a fear of detection as detection itself. After a moment he resumed:

"What I mean to say is—Harris may have taken a fancy to them, and so I thought in that case I didn't want to be hard on him, and that you might carry the thing through—find out whether he's guilty, you know, etc., etc."

"Exactly. I see. Find him guilty."

Lord Bellamy gazed at the detective stupefied.

"I mean, find out if he is guilty," the detective added, vacantly.

Lord Bellamy wondered if he had been drinking.

"I don't care much about this sort of case. It isn't good for my art, but to oblige you, my lord. I'll come along." He put on his hat, and took up a stick and a pair of gloves. The effect was absolutely what it was meant to be. He looked a social loungeur.

Lord Bellamy had never been out with him before, and felt uncomfortable. He took him back, showed him the safe, and explained that he always kept the keys about him.

"Have the man in and accuse him," murmured Mr. Quarry, sniffing at a buttonhole he had bought at Solomon's on the way. "It never prejudices a case, and one can always tell at once whether a man is guilty or not—or rather, I should say, I can."

Lord Bellamy experienced an indefinable sensation of having become the tool instead of the chief plotter.

He, however, rang the bell, and Harris appeared. Mr. Quarry said nothing, but stood by the window, interested apparently in the park below.

"Harris," said Lord Bellamy, after a moment's nervousness, "some of my jewels are missing."

There was a looking-glass in the window. Mr. Quarry had a good view of Harris. "Man quite innocent. The wicked earl has got a little game. Where is the woman?"

"Indeed, my lord? Your lordship never mentioned it."

"Lord Bellamy thinks that you have taken them," said an expressionless voice from the window.

There was a long silence. The man-servant blanched to the lips, and gazed for a moment helplessly from Lord Bellamy's averted eye to the detective.

"Your lordship suspects me?"

"I'm afraid I do, Harris."

"On what grounds, my lord?"

The detective turned languidly round.

"Shall we go and search your boxes?" he murmured.

"Certainly, sir, but——"

"Who am I?" Lord Bellamy has told me of his suspicions. I say they're groundless. Much better search your boxes. Do you have boxes?"

"I have a couple of portmanteaus, sir."

"They are more convenient. We'll just search your boxes, I mean portmanteaus, and then there can be no further unpleasantness."

They processioned upstairs. The man-servant looked like a ghost. He had something in the nature of a broken heart, for he remembered seventeen years of drudgery in the service of this fop, for whom, curiously enough, he possessed a sentiment.

The afternoon sun streamed through the blinds into Harris' shabby, dingy room—a very shabby room, comfortable as servants' apartments in mansions of the great are apt to be.

The detective suggested that they

should begin on the nearest portmantau.

"Locked," he said, looking at it.

Harris produced the key.

"You might open it."

The man knelt down, and threw the lid back. One by one he took the things out and laid them on the floor.

Lifting up the last article he started and paused. An electric thrill ran through him leaving him motionless, yet vibrant.

The detective was by him like lightning, and in a second was holding out a brown leather case to Lord Bellamy.

"This yours?" he said.

"Yes. Diamond buttons, aren't they? Just look."

"What shall I do—send for the police?"

"No. Would you mind leaving me alone with Harris for a moment? I shall be glad if you will wait downstairs," he added as the detective left them.

Lord Bellamy closed the door and stole a furtive glance at the man. For a moment he was sorry. Fear he did not feel. It was not in his composition.

"Well, Harris, what are you going to do?"

"I am quite innocent, your lordship."

"Quite so. What I wanted to tell you was this. I will forgive you on one condition. Of course, you have no character now. I will give you one if you serve me faithfully for three years from this date. If not, I shall send for the police."

Without waiting for a reply Lord Bellamy left the room.

For some time after he was gone the man stood immovable. Then he threw his arms above his head with a wild cry, choked almost at its birth.

He quietly unpacked his things, and sat down to write a letter.

Lord Bellamy was waiting below to dress. The suspense was terrible. Had his plan succeeded? Half a dozen times he had his hand on the bell. The clock pointing to four warned him that he had an appointment to drive one of his wife's dearest friends to Ranelagh. He

pulled himself together and rang the bell.

Harris appeared. Lord Bellamy stole a glance at his face. It was unreadable.

"I am going to Ranelagh, Harris. Get me out some things."

Harris left the room. As the door closed Lord Bellamy clapped his hands hysterically. He was saved. Then, passing his hand over a brow on which the sweat had gathered, he sank into a chair with almost a sob of relief.

That season Lord Bellamy played heavily. It may have been the guilty feeling in his soul which drove him to seek a nepenthe in artificial excitement. Besides playing heavily he, curiously enough, won heavily, which fact roused in him an additional feeling of discomfort. He had a weird notion that he had become the devil's own. His phenomenal luck became the talk first of the club and then of the town, and there were not wanting some among those whose money he had won to repeat the word phenomenal with increasing accent. Such remarks dropped here and there and fell upon the ears of servants, which, for the purpose of bearing scandalous fruit, is never barren ground.

As they descended from stratum to stratum, hardly a process of filtration, they gathered in unpleasantness, till half the servants' halls in London were agog for impending scandal.

Harris heard it, and as morning after morning he saw the pile of notes and gold on the dressing table he conceived a way by which circumstances might be made the instruments of his retaliation.

He sat up with a pen and ink, and wrote a letter.

He sat up with a dress coat of Lord Bellamy's and stitched.

The season was almost dead. Lord Bellamy began to wish, for all his luck, that its pastime had been, as heretofore, women. A run of luck with them does not touch the pockets of dear friends, in fact, in some cases it relieves them of milliners' bills. He nearly decided to play no more, but the evening of July 10th, saw him hurrying from a little dinner his wife had been giving, to the club, where they were not sup-

posed to play for more than a certain amount, and sometimes played for twenty times as much.

Harris had been a little awkward in dressing him, had put his coat on clumsily, and had nearly spoiled his temper for the evening.

A passer-by, seeing Lord Bellamy's saturnine face and thin, black-robed figure against a background crimsoned by the shaded light in the hall, thought of a devil in a lake of fire.

As the door closed behind him the obsequious one shook a menacing and threatening forefinger.

At the club play commenced, and Lord Bellamy's luck seemed stronger than ever. Young Bergamot, the son of a successful tradesman, had just lost his fifteen thousand, and was entering on his sixteenth, when he suddenly threw down his cards. The reserved excitement of many days, indeed of weeks, culminated in an access of fury.

"By God! I begin to believe that letter's true!" The voice, harsh, penetrating, indicative of an unusual mood, brought every one in the room to the table.

Lord Bellamy looked at him languidly. He thought he had gone mad. Perhaps it was the effect of good form and high-breeding on humble origin.

"What is the matter, Bergamot?" said a middle-aged Mercutio.

The rage in Bergamot's soul drove all considerations of caution helter-skelter.

"Lord Bellamy's cheating!" he shouted.

Lord Bellamy rose to his feet, looking every inch—what he was.

"You little fool!" he murmured disdainfully.

"Read that letter." Bergamot handed it with trembling fingers to Mercutio.

He was beginning to shiver a little with fear.

There was dead silence in the room as the letter was read.

Lord Bellamy spoke once.

"What does this nonsense mean?"

No one answered. There was an unsympathetic muteness.

He had won too much. It had been past bearing.

"This letter," said Mercutio, "says that Lord Bellamy wears a trick sleeve in which he carries a supply of aces."

Lord Bellamy laughed, a silvery laugh.

Was that all? To a guilty soul like his an abyss yawned ever before him, and he had been really frightened. He held out his hands, and Mercutio saying: "As a matter of form, my dear Bellamy," helped him off with his coat.

He and another examined the coat, and held up the ace of spades—a singularly unlucky card.

The stillness was awful.

It was broken by a voice, saying:

"Shall I help you on with your coat, Lord Bellamy, merely as a matter of form?"

Moving like a mechanical figure, Lord Bellamy went out into the night. A hansom jerked from the rank to the pavement. He hardly noticed it. He walked on. He had almost entered another club of which he was a member, but paused on the first step. Practically he was no longer a member of any club, and unconsciously he wondered whether the news had been telephoned through.

In a little empty way near Curzon street he broke into a laugh—a loud, boisterous laugh. He laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, till two stray cats tore hither and thither, terrified for their lives. A policeman came round the corner suddenly, and he stopped abruptly, feeling not a little foolish.

He reached Park Lane and let himself in. He reached his room and sat down to think.

Life was quite over. He owed it to his wife and to his position to remember that. He wrote a few lines, and then went into the dressing-room.

There was a band playing somewhere, and he waited to hear the melody finished.

Then he began to laugh again, so mirthfully that three times he had to pause in his preparations.

"A very good joke," said Lord Bellamy, laughing, as he cut his throat, "a very good joke, indeed."

DOWN SCONONDO RIVER

By Clinton Scollard

DREAMING down Sconondo River,
Underneath the autumn sky,
Watching where the sun rays shiver,
And the prisms bubbles lie,
And the little rushes quiver
As the boat slips by!

O, the breadth of blue above us,
Freshly winnowed, swept of rain!
And the wind that seems to love us,
Whispering a low refrain—
Joy in life!—and making of us
Such a happy twain!

Gliding down the liquid reaches,
Through the pageant of the year—
Pennoned oaks and bannered beeches,
Maple-arras far and near,
And the vermeil vine that pleaches
Where the firs lift sheer!

Drifting through the crystal weather,
Floating on an under sky,
Freed from every troublous tether,
Comrade Love and you and I,
Dreaming the old dream together,
As the boat slips by!

LUXURIES OF THE MILLIONAIRE

IV.—A WOMAN'S COST OF LIVING

By Frank S. Arnett

"The courtroom was crowded with women whose rich dresses showed they came from good families."

THE sentence is quoted literally from a New York newspaper's account of a recent and sensational trial. It is luminously informative and corrective. Here have some of us been making unjust distinctions in our analysis of women we did not personally know among the crowds on Broadway and the Avenue. All wore rich gowns. Hence, as we should have realized, they were, of course, from good families. We have, too, misguidedly, approved when our sisters and cousins held aloof from American women we thought somewhat flamboyant in their gorgeousness at Monaco, or whose hauteur, as they swept from Doucet's to their carriage, seemed of recent purchase. It would now appear that here, also, we have been unkind. The richness of their attire could not be denied. How, then, could we deny their birth and breeding?

That fine feathers make fine birds once had wide credence. Strange that any of us imagined that such plumage ever covered birds of prey. The law to-day deals not with manufacturing, but with genealogy. Once it gave hope for the future. The new reading is retroactive. It creates an ancestry. In the last century the diamond represented money. In the present it is indicative of birth. Another hundred years and it will be the badge of brains.

Get money in thy purse is a generalizing bit of advice applicable only to man. Get clothed is the essential pre-

liminary for woman. Until she is properly gowned her purse will remain empty. Which makes the advice seem difficult to follow. Yet Eve was not an heiress, and she had to obtain an entire wardrobe, from slippers to hairpins. Consequently, there is no occasion for any to repine at poverty or lowly birth. It is unnecessary to scrub office floors or seek admission to comic opera choruses. And, I beg of you, don't barter your soul. Souls in rags are a drug on the market. Beg, borrow or steal clothes. That's the first thing. Don a Worth gown and, presto! you are of good family. Place a tiara on your brow, and the College of Heraldry is knocked into a cocked hat—you have a ready-made ancestry of dukes and earls and signers of the Declaration of American Independence.

Such, at least, is the gospel expounded in the quotation. Small wonder that many are deluded into this belief, when we notice the prominence of those that are seized upon as subjects for its texts. Small wonder that the other day a bank teller arrested for embezzlement, charged his downfall to the extravagance of his wife, the cost of her dresses having regularly amounted to more than his annual salary of \$1,600. Just previously, had not Mrs. Chetwynd commenced suit against her mother, Mrs. Naylor-Leyland, claiming that one brought up as a millionaire's daughter could not possibly live on \$20,000 a year?

And, while the absurdity of the

quoted lines is self-evident, one cannot deny that dress plays by far the most important part in the comedy—in some cases one might truthfully term it, the tragedy—of the woman's cost of living. The spending of their pin money is a comedy of itself, to those American women of wealth to whom dress is the sum and substance of their social existence. There are a few women priding themselves upon being absolutely modern, to whom the love of dress is above that of God or man. With a belief in this pre-eminence the daughters of certain millionaires are carefully inoculated in babyhood—provided at that period the millions have already arrived. Unfortunately, these requisites are sometimes tardy. In such cases, the making over of both mother and daughter leaves them much akin to gowns that have been similarly treated. The process has never been perfected and never will be perfected.

All of millionairdom's women do not divide their love in the ratio just indicated. But can a miracle of economy and simplicity be expected of a *débutante* of eighteen that at the age of two has had a budget, including expenditures for flowers, charities, visiting cards; whose toilet articles were jeweled, her bathtub of silver; whose salaried retinue numbered her personal laundress, coachman, physician and private secretary? She was christened in robes of rarest lace, and was carried to the function in a \$500 cloak. She visited Europe at an age when the average New York baby is in luck to be taken to Central Park; and was accompanied by many trunks filled with costly morning, afternoon and evening costumes, bath robes and *robes de nuit*, all supplied by the most fashionable outfitter to the infant class of millionairdom.

Later came the society school—provided its authorities decided that the social position of the family warranted the admission of the daughter; to which the parents were forced to submit the highest references, if you please, although once these were demanded of the school itself. The camel passing through a needle's eye, or a Tammany

heeler joining the Knickerbocker Club are not more incredible feats than the admission to such a school of a girl from among the socially impossible. Here, again, we have progressed. Two centuries ago the boy without a grandfather sat at the foot of the school dinner table. To-day the girl similarly lacking can have no seat at all.

Of course she did not find sewing or cooking included in the curriculum. But there was a gymnasium. It is fashionable to be healthy—which is one blessing. For the rest, "Literature, Music and Art!"—that's the magic trio she found would "mold character and prepare for the life of earnest responsibility now spreading out in all its magnificent breadth in front of American girlhood." And all this for only \$1,000 a school year. No guarantee of future breadth, earnestness or responsibility goes with the diploma. If it did no one would go to the school. But the girl is graduated with a perfect knowledge of the importance of dress, and there is no extra charge for that.

Then come private tutors in music, languages and literature. The last is the cheapest. The three can be had for \$1,500 a year. Riding lessons and their incidentals foot up \$800 more than literature. Instruction from a wild-eyed expert in the latest fad, Brahmanism, sun-worship, snake-charming, whatever it happens to be, adds something. And dress costs as much as music, languages, literature, the horse and the fad all rolled into one. If she seems to care for anything under heaven more than for clothes there's trouble. She is systematically trained by daily tours of the shops and regular visits to the exhibition rooms of fashionable dressmakers.

A famous vocalist teaches her, not how to sing, but how to talk. Even banalities must be exchanged in cultured tones. From others she learns how to stand and how to walk. Add the governess and the French maid; add the dancing master, the masseuse, the dentist, the chiropodist, the manicurist, and the corset anatomist; add the artist, studying her that the style of clothing and

arrangement of the hair may be in keeping with her supposed type of beauty, and doing away, actually or artificially, with every facial or bodily blemish—and there you have a young woman of millionairdom under as thorough preparation for marriage as if she lived among that race of savages who, for some months before the event, bury the dear girls to their necks in the ground so that they will grow nice and fat.

All this successfully accomplished, as well as a brief European tour—chiefly for more dresses—she is ready for her coming-out ball. That over, the *débütante* may “raise the ante” in clothes, as one woman expressed it, in a little game for a matrimonial prize and an unlimited budget. The year immediately before has required not less than \$5,000, and until her marriage the annual expenditure is about the same. Not including her *trousseau*, I should say that in New York's millionaire set, the average bride of twenty-two represents at the very lowest, a parental investment of \$34,000. Add the *trousseau* and wedding expenses, and if she does not land a matrimonial catch of \$20,000,000 she will have proved a losing venture, figuring her at five per cent.

The wedding alone may cost a million. For ten minutes you inhale the fragrance of flowers costing thousands. Even trifling details count. Following one such sacerdotal rite a quarter of a ton wedding cake, stuffed with jewels was brought in on a miniature railway car, rolling over rails of solid silver. A marriage is not to be sneezed at—and crying has gone out of fashion—when steam yachts and Fifth Avenue mansions built on purpose are the ordinary gifts of any self-respecting parent. I was once lured to a wedding where there was no cake and no gifts; where the girl clung tremblingly to her husband as though the proverbial coach and four had been pursued by an angry father—which it hadn't, because there was no coach, and, besides, the parents had not learned of the impending catastrophe. The young couple did not even

ride from the church, yet had the impudence to be happy ever after. And to others, where the funny old wedding cake, containing a single ring that was to foretell the quick coming luck of its finder, was cut by the bride amid the merriest laughter that ever was, choked a bit at times, it is true, by little lumps that insisted on getting into the throat; and the pieces wrapped in tissue paper and carried away, to be thrust under the pillows of a lot of whole-hearted girls, some of whom had been kissed like everything by the bride just because they had chipped in to give her a pair of vases spangled with gilt. But, then, these were very vulgar affairs indeed.

I can assure you, nevertheless, that the father at the fashionable wedding has his gulplings just like other fathers. He would find it a relief if he could let a few tears roll down his nose; or, better still, throw his arms around his little girl and blubber out the love of which, somehow, he has never had time to tell her. But, even now, there is no time, neither time nor place, for he is awed by a magnificence that might be that of a coronation. And it's much like that all through life in millionairdom. At bottom the heart is all right, but there is no time to prove the fact—scarcely time to fall in love. Yet in the amalgamation of Wall Street's fever and Fifth Avenue's frivolity honest hearts more frequently find their perfect mates than is believed by disciples of yellow journalism.

The wedding over, the woman finds everything systematically arranged, so that the spending of money shall give her the least possible annoyance. Many personally attend to the business details of their inherited estates. Others have stupendous allowances from their husbands. In the majority of families of great wealth the wives have entirely distinct incomes. Mrs. Frank Jay Gould, formerly Helen Margaret Kelly, receives \$50,000 from her personal estate. This is small compared with her husband's annual income of something over \$400,000, but friends of the family hope it will be sufficient to permit her to dress half-way decently.

For the woman of wealth New York banks make elaborate provision. She has her own windows and special tellers to receive her deposits or cash her checks. For her bejeweled pocketbook are kept great stacks of crisp and never-used bills, and glittering, freshly coined gold and silver. For her are specially made checkbooks in rich and costly bindings. For her are cosy boudoirs and comfortable writing-rooms, with dainty stationery; separate rooms in the safety deposit vaults; palms, Oriental rugs and divans, exquisite water colors, furnishings in rare woods, bronze and sterling silver—at her command the latest literature and a maid. All this in a secluded nook in that matter-of-fact place, where, just beyond the partition, her husband, haggard of eye and damp of brow, may be struggling with the president in an effort to secure a loan on somewhat doubtful security.

We will, then, suppose that she has her bank account and safety deposit vault. How does she spend her money? We need not include such details as household expenses, balls or amateur circuses—the man pays for these. But in what consists her own particular expenses? What is the cost of her wardrobe, her clubs, her personal pleasures and idiosyncrasies?

Gowns come first, of course. As a matter of fact, \$4,000 a year is looked upon as a modest allowance upon which a woman of wealth may clothe herself. Within a week after her arrival in Paris last March, Mrs. Philip Lydig, formerly Mrs. W. E. D. Stokes, spent \$30,000 for gowns. Also Mrs. Samuel Newhouse, wife of the mining magnate, after ordering several dresses in the French capital, expressed the fear that the bills would amount to \$1,500. Her husband gave her a check for \$10,000, remarking that the remainder would probably be needed for incidentals. He was not at all surprised later to learn that the gowns alone came to the entire ten thousand. Again: Mrs. Raymond S. Benham, of Chicago, has brought suit for divorce. The press stated that to prove her "extravagance, vanity and infidelity," her husband, in

his cross-bill, has itemized her wardrobe, which cost \$32,000. You see that, if you take the daily papers as a guide, you will become confused as you enter more deeply into this mysterious subject; for, according to the papers, in New York dress proves birth, in Chicago, infidelity.

At a recent reception in Rome an American woman wore a \$50,000 gown, and the same sum was paid for that in which another American appeared a few weeks ago in London. But the first was embroidered with diamonds, and the second so flecked with span-gles of gold that, practically, it was a creation of precious metal. More pertinent is the unjeweled \$35,000 gown, the lace alone worth \$25,000, owned by Mrs. Celia Wallace, the eccentric Chicago possessor of millions, whose barbaric display of diamonds was wont fairly to ruin the performances of opera at the Auditorium.

One New York woman never spends less than \$60,000 a year for dress. The feat is not difficult. The wedding cor-set of a recent American bride cost \$250. Its hooks were of gold, and the golden garter clasps were set with diamonds. Another paid \$2,000 for her lingerie alone. I am told also of such marvels as hand-painted silk stockings, showing cupids or bacchantes, snakes whose eyes are emeralds, or flowers with dew-drops of diamonds. As they cost something like \$800 a pair, and can never be washed, could you blame their owner if she chose a rainy day to wear them?

And furs!—worn some thousands of years ago neither from modesty nor vanity, but merely to keep warm, clothed in which ladies of the stone age ran about throwing hammers at each other; these are again in favor, and even the hammer is not entirely obsolete in the best society. While women of wealth possess all sorts of furry oddities, such as Chinese dog and the pelt of Russian ponies, the English coronation made ermine, the traditional royal garb, so much in demand that it was feared the supply, chiefly from Siberia, would be insufficient, even for the peerage. In consequence, two colors predominated

at the last New York Horse Show. Some women were white with ermine. The others were green with envy.

During the present year two women, Florence A. Twombly and Alice G. Vanderbilt, were among the five residents of New York City assessed for personal property to the value of \$1,000,000 each, while eighty-four women were included among those taxed on \$50,000 or more. These sums represent inadequately the wealthy woman's budget, and to a still less extent the value of her wardrobe.

The truth is that a list could here be presented including the names of at least one hundred New York women whose wardrobes alone have cost from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000 or more each. This lavish expenditure for woman's dress has set a pace for the entire world. Our reputation in St. Petersburg, for example, is shown by the fact that the Countess Marguerite de Cassini, of the Russian embassy, did not dare arrive in Washington with less than eighty-four brand new gowns, thirty-seven hats and thirty-six pairs of shoes. She knew that in American millionairdom, as in Athens of old, to be badly gowned is a crime. But with us this is a figure of speech. To the Athenian woman it meant the police court and a fine. That's love of beauty with a vengeance.

Our Consul-General at Paris reports that for the American woman there was purchased in France during 1901 dress goods, buttons and trimmings, feathers, flowers and millinery, jewelry and precious stones, corsets and gloves, to the value of \$8,400,000. This represents only what was bought for, not by her. She doubtless personally purchased enough to more than double the sum named. Add to this the importations from and individual purchases in other countries, gems and furs from Russia, laces from Italy and Belgium, linen from Ireland—another million and a quarter surely—and we find that to clothe and beautify the American woman there was spent in Europe during 1901 more than \$18,000,000. As it is known that the annual importation of precious stones alone amounts to \$15,000,000, it

will be seen that the figures should really be at least \$30,000,000. Lady Algernon Gordon Lennox, admittedly the best gowned woman in England, says that American women are the finest dressers in the world! Judging from these statistics they ought to be. But I wonderingly turn to Genesis, third chapter and seventh verse, to read again of fashions in the good old times: "And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons!"

And this, somewhat sadly, reminds us of the fact that our theatrical beauties, added to of late years by society recruits, have caught the madness for gowns, with the result that last season saw a score of stage costumes costing from \$1,000 to \$2,500 each. The patron of the drama has only the choice between Lady Godiva and Cleopatra. At one theatre Dame Nature; at the other M. Worth. There is no middle course save under protection of the swashbuckler.

Even that popular individual leads us among riches in women's dress, reminding us that this alone of all the luxuries of to-day is not of recent growth. For half a thousand years woman has been preached at for her low-cut gowns, and her extravagance has time and again been curbed by law. In mediæval England, when a covering for the floor save mud and rushes was unknown, and when women of wealth in their own apartments had only rude benches on which to sit, they had shoes of cloth of gold and costly furs and gems—although not a soul of them all possessed a nightgown. And can you realize that there was no such thing as a pin. How a woman of that day ever got dressed is a mystery too deep for a modern man to solve.

But as one goes farther back and acquaints himself with the voluptuous splendor of life and dress in Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia and Persia long before the Tower of Babel, he finds that it is in man's luxury of apparel that there has been a change, not in woman's. I read in vain of the ancient Roman woman to find anything of which she of American millionairdom has been de-

prived, save only gross immensity and bizarre debauchery.

Let us admit, then, even though it is no new thing, that her gowns are irreproachable. What comes next in importance in her cost of living? To the public, probably, her clubs. To her they are not a serious item. Not including the fashionable Country Club, of which her husband is also a member, possibly she pays something like \$150 in annual dues, and the total cost of her club life is then not more than \$500 or \$600 a year. The New York Ladies' Club, now non-existent, was the most exclusive in the metropolis. Its initiation fee was but \$20, and the annual dues amounted to \$30. It costs \$25 to join Sorosis, while something like \$33 will pay the dues and for the various breakfasts and dinners. You can become a patroness of a fashionable hospital or a life member of almost any old thing for \$100. At the newly quartered Woman's Club in New York, dining and writing rooms, dressing-rooms and attendant maids, sleeping-rooms, where for a dollar you may put up for the night; lockers, where a change of clothes may be kept; telephone, telegraph and messenger service, Turkish and Russian baths, with a trained nurse—all these are obtainable with annual dues of but \$15.

A woman's club, you will observe, is not what it used to be. But if discussions of Tolstoi have been superseded by those of terrapin no great harm is done. If the whichness of the whence has descended to the joyousness of the now, so much the better. And perhaps Kipling will bring out a jollier sister or more companionable wife or sweetheart than did Browning.

Whatever else may be said of them, clubs and athletics have done away with moping and weeping. The woman more frequently gets away from the hearthstone, but she returns to it healthier in mind and body. When she faces her husband over a dainty dinner table she can talk to him of something besides household worries. The neglected woman to-day is the woman that doesn't know the meaning of fresh air and is

content to be "a sight" when her husband comes home.

"My life was never destined to be quite happy," was said by W. K. Vanderbilt to an English journalist. "You see I have nothing to hope for—nothing sufficiently definite to be sought after, that is. Inherited wealth is a handicap to happiness. It is as certain death to ambition as—well, as cocaine is to morality!"

Nothing could better express the difference between the points of view of men and women of wealth. For never has woman had so much to live and hope for, never has she been so free to enjoy her wealth. In but one thing is she a loser. The age of universal costume, when armored knights, heraldic devices emblazoned on their cloaks, passed in and out among those whose every class and trade had its distinctive dress, even to the gay livery of servants and the motley garb of mountebanks—that also was the age when man gave dramatic expression to his romantic and chivalric devotion to woman. And so to-day he clothes his language as he does his person, prosaically. Woman, having retained her regal picturesqueness of costume, retains as a consequence all her poetry and romance, and at a critical crisis is, without affectation, as theatric as any heroine of melodrama. Possessed of wealth, health and freedom, her one regret is that the tailor has gagged the lover.

And yet, co-existent with a healthful fruition of freedom, it must be admitted that there has been, in certain quarters, an increase in certain aging excesses on the part of cultured and brilliant women of wealth that has added quite a little to their cost of living.

This is the result of the nervous demand for a stimulant that must be of constantly increasing power—the diseased craving that is the natural maturation of a strenuous social existence not properly offset by the outdoor life indulged in by the more level-headed.

For it is a busy life, this of the woman of wealth. Even Sunday has ceased to be a day of rest. It is now the day of

afternoon musicales, for which the stars of the grand opera are engaged at a fabulous price. And in the evening the women summon their friends to dinner at the Waldorf, at Sherry's, or Delmonico's. There is no cessation save during Lent, and even that period is seized upon for wholesale shopping, there being no other time for it. Then, too, she becomes remorseful and propitiates Providence by her contribution to the Easter plate. On last Easter Sunday a half-million dollars was placed on the plates in New York City, the offering at Grace church alone amounting to \$36,000, and the congregation's total for Lent being \$107,000.

This formed the conscience fund of the daughters of Eve. In religion the American millionaire is the pupil of his wife.

At this season, also, the woman of wealth lavishes gifts as recklessly as at Christmas. The egg has ceased to be the Easter symbol. The baby of high degree now gives her allegiance to the confectioner, and the tot of ten or twelve orders bon-bons at \$5 a pound with the utmost nonchalance. The mother spends hundreds in flowers for her Easter table, while other hundreds go in gifts of dainty baskets of fruit—with hothouse grapes at \$3 a pound. A leading New York florist has been known to dispose of \$25,000 in flowers on the day before Easter.

All these obligations fulfilled, she is off again to Aiken, to Florida, her country seat on Long Island, or, more probably, at this time of year, to Europe, returning only for the late summer season at Newport, Lenox or Tuxedo. And, while she has a villa at one of the latter places, a great estate in the South, a town house, and possibly a permanent residence in Paris or London, where a daughter or sister married into the peerage, she retains apartments at a sumptuous New York hotel, where she may put up at any moment.

With advancing age there is added to the woman's cost of living its only regretted item—that representing the preservation of her beauty. If self-

preservation has been her first law in place of, as often it is, her last, the task is simple. If she postpones its observance the fakir in beauty culture reaps his harvest. Few professional guides know the road to the fountain of eternal youth. Milk baths, it is true, are out of fashion. The sprightly actress that amused us by hers, once, after giving the receipt for her favorite perfume—white heliotrope, chypre, violet, *peau d'espagne*—remarked: "You'll have just what I use, but, I warn you now, I'll invent something else." Yet even her baths were not original. Popæa took them. The only difference was that the milk in which Octavia's murderess bathed came from the ass, while the animal only paid for that used by the actress. Probably the result was equally efficacious.

But, as a matter of fact, the average woman born to riches, in girlhood physically perfected, throughout life every possible care taken from her, arrives at three score and ten more charming than was her grandmother at forty. She has no wrinkles to hide with rouge, no bones to bury beneath her lace. She is not a hideously painted and jeweled specter at the opera. At the Horse Show her enjoyment is as keen as that of her *débutante* granddaughter. There is no greater error than to believe it no longer fashionable to be happy. The American girl of millionaire-dom may be frivolous in her happiness, but she is honest in it. And if the young matron has not been poisoned by late hours and the wine cup, or the freedom of field sports and the country clubs, she is happy because she is healthy, happy in the brownness of her hands, in having buried petty gossip beneath the live knowledge of affairs she shares with men. She is alluring in her enthusiasm as in her beauty. She has forgotten what it is to be *blasé*. She loves her frocks, but, once they are donned, is unconscious of them. Even at the perilous period of middle life she is more frequently inspired to purity by the self-respect-giving perfection of her gowns than lulled into sensuality through their luxury.

SURF MUSIC

ALL day I hear along the sandy shore
 The melancholy music of the Sea—
 The green-robed choir of Ocean sing to me,
 Chanting the legends of their ancient lore.
 I hear the tales of mariners of yore,
 Of ships gone down, of tempests blowing free;
 I hear the mast, remembering the tree,
 Grieve for the grove and all its leaves once more.

But when night comes and in the deep blue sky
 Gather the stars above the fields of foam,
 The music changes, and in fancy I
 Again the old familiar forests roam
 And hear the mast's companions as they cry:
 Blow, Wind, and bring our captive brother home!

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.



A GHOST

HE thought it but a passing mood
 That gave him thought of her,
 That brought her face again;
 An idle call of memory
 The sense of presence in the room,
 The wind-swayed curtain's stir,
 The wistful whisper at his ear,
 The rain touch at the pane.

He thought it but a passing mood
 That stirred old memories;
 He went his all-forgetting way
 To joys that life demands;
 Nor knew one followed in his way
 With hungry, tender eyes—
 A poor, mute ghost with patient lips
 And supplicating hands.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

UN MAUVAIS QUART D'HEURE

Par Masson-Forestier

POUR tuer le temps durant le trajet, le banquier avait acheté, à la gare, un "auteur gai," bien que la *gaudriole* ne fût guère dans ses goûts, car il passait pour être d'humeur morose, comme souvent, d'ailleurs, les êtres chétifs et mal portants. Seulement, ce soir-là, ayant à écarter de pénibles soucis, il demandait à un livre ce qu'il n'osait demander à personne — le distraire pendant la route.

Depuis quelques années, en effet, il était si fortement engagé à la Bourse que les émotions du jeu lui avaient fatigué le cerveau, le rendant nerveux et inquiet. Il ne dormait plus, ne goûtait jamais ni repos ni quiétude d'esprit, même les jours où il avait réalisé un gros gain. A être toujours ainsi roidis, ses traits avaient fini par se crispier de grimaces soudaines, assez effrayantes pour qui n'y était point accoutumé. Aussi, bien que voyager tout seul la nuit lui inspirât d'autant plus de crainte que, depuis quelque temps, on ne parlait que d'agressions nocturnes, le banquier, par sentiment attristé de sa disgrâce physique, se résignait presque toujours, à rechercher les compartiments vides.

Comme toute la journée il avait fait très lourd, que le temps sentait l'orage, peu de gens s'étaient mis en route — à raison du préjugé répandu dans l'Ouest que les trains en marche *attirent la foudre*. Le banquier trouva donc aisément un compartiment vacant. Il y monta, installa soigneusement sa sacoche sur les coussins en face de lui, non sans se dire qu'un malfaiteur ferait ce soir-là une fameuse opération en l'assassinant. Oui, un crime comme celui de l'autre jour, sur la ligne de Lyon. Ce pauvre agent de change! Et dire que

depuis tant d'années qu'on ne cessait, dans les journaux, de faire campagne contre les compagnies, afin de les contraindre à installer des sonnettes d'alarme, on n'obtenait rien, rien!

Enfin, après tout, il n'aurait pas, comme la semaine précédente, le désagrément de contempler, deux heures durant, de ces horripilantes têtes d'imbéciles ou de quintex qui vous énervent encore plus que les trépidations des roues sur les rails. Et puis on pouvait ouvrir les fenêtres sans demander permission à personne; et ce n'était point dommage, car, sapristi, quelle chaleur!

Un peu avant le pont du Manoir, un éclair illumina le ciel. D'autres lui succédèrent rapidement. Le banquier suspendit sa lecture. Le ciel se couvrait rapidement, devenait livide. Tout le fond de l'horizon avait ces tons roux de fumée d'incendie qui promettent une formidable averse. De-ci de-la, entre deux éclairs, de fins nuages s'accrochaient les uns aux autres, tourbillonnant, se mêlant, puis repartaient tout déchirés, avec une vitesse folle de chevaux emportés.

Soudain la poussière arriva en rafales, précédant une petite grêle sèche qui hachait tout, faisant rage sur le toit et contre les vitres du wagon. Quelques minutes de plus et c'était un déchaînement universel, un déluge. On n'y voyait plus. Par la portière, le vent jetait les feuilles d'arbre à la brassée. C'était un véritable ouragan, une trombe. Le wagon, heurté, dansait sur ses ressorts comme s'il allait être chaviré.

Le banquier fut obligé de fermer son livre. D'ailleurs, la lueur du quinquet

devenait si faible qu'il n'était plus possible de lire. .

Alors, un peu hébété, oppressé par la tension électrique de l'atmosphère, il attendit. Quoi? Il ne savait. Mais certainement quelque chose allait se passer.

La rage de la tempête restait toujours la même. A un éclair plus éblouissant qui lui fit mal aux yeux, il crut qu'il n'allait pas retrouver sa respiration. Juste à ce moment le train accéléra sa vitesse, comme si le mécanicien eût eu hâte de se mettre à l'abri sous quelque tunnel. Quelle imprudence, se disait le banquier, car enfin, si l'on se heurtait à des arbres tombés en travers de la voie! .

Cependant, se rendant compte qu'à s'énerver ainsi il n'aboutirait qu'à se rendre inutilement malade, il s'efforça de ne plus penser à rien. Il ferma les yeux, se boucha les oreilles et se blottit dans un coin.

Il essaya d'abord de diriger ses pensées vers certaine opération de minéral dont la liquidation serait très fructueuse; mais déjà il était, malgré lui, ressaisi par la préoccupation des dangers du voyage. Ah! que les gens prudents avaient donc eu raison, ce soir-là, de ne pas se mettre en route! Sa peur croissait démesurément, sans qu'il sût pour quoi. Il restait haletant; maintenant, c'était une insupportable angoisse. Ah! qu'il eût donné cher, dans sa détresse aiguë, pour entendre une voix humaine, pour sentir quelqu'un à ses côtés. L'idée qu'il était seul, loin de tout secours possible, l'épouvantait. Mais... où était-on? Tout à l'heure, n'avait-on pas franchi un pont?

"Tiens, se dit-il, il y a un ralentissement brusque. C'est étrange. Y aurait-il quelque obstacle sur la voie?... Non, se n'est qu'un tunnel, car voici qu'on repart et le train siffle. Oh! que c'est odieux, ce sifflement des trains qui s'engagent dans un tunnel! C'est comme un sanglot désespéré. On dirait le dernier appel d'un agonisant. Non, je ne veux plus l'entendre!" Et il se boucha les oreilles.

Le sifflet avait cessé, remplacé par l'assourdissant fracas des parois du tun-

nel, quand, rouvrant les yeux, le banquier vit, avec une inexprimable terreur, que quelqu'un venait d'entrer dans son compartiment et refermait la porte... Un homme tout mouillé, les vêtements en lambeaux. Quant à ses traits, on ne les voyait guère, un foulard lui cachant la moitié de la figure.

L'individu semblait n'avoir pas aperçu le banquier. On eût dit qu'il cherchait à se dendrer compte sur lui-même de quelque chose qui l'effarait. Il regardait ses mains, toutes balafrées d'égratignures, pleines de sang. Cet examen, paraît-il, le rendit furieux. Il lança un juron terrible qui fit sursauter le banquier qui poussa un léger cri.

En s'apercevant qu'il n'était pas seul, l'homme eut un brusque recul, comme pour se mettre en défense; puis il souleva le bandeau qu'il avait sur l'œil, montrant une face ravagée, meurtrie, sanglante. Les cheveux étaient tout mêlés, le col de chemise arraché. A coup sûr, c'était un assassin! . . . Le misérable, son crime commis, avait dû ramper le long du marchepied pour chercher un wagon vide et s'y réfugier un instant, afin d'essuyer ses blessures. . . Il s'était trompé; quelqu'un l'avait vu et ce quelqu'un le livrerait à la justice! . . . Ah! quels yeux terribles! . . . Le banquier comprit qu'il allait mourir. Une terreur glaciale qui tuait tout sentiment lui serra les tempes comme dans un étou.

"Je suis perdu, perdu, se répétait-il. Ce n'est pas à l'argent qu'il en veut, le bandit; il doit en avoir les poches pleines. . . C'est à moi. . . Il lui faut ma vie! . . . Et pourtant, vais-je me laisser égorger?"

Rassemblant toute son énergie, il releva la tête; il cherchait le regard de l'homme. Celui-ci, chose étrange, au lieu d'avancer, s'était rencogné dans un coin, et, ramassé sur lui-même, semblait se préparer moins à attaquer qu'à se défendre.

Alors le banquier eut une lueur d'espoir. Si le bandit n'avait plus d'arme! . . . s'il avait jeté son couteau! Ce serait la lutte des poings, des ongles. . . L'un plus robuste, mais l'autre plus adroit, peut-être. Ou pouvait essayer

de se défendre! Et puis, qui sait, les nerveux ont, quand il le faut, le poignet solide. En étreignant l'assassin à la gorge, on pourrait. Oui, mais tout l'avantage, en ce cas, serait à l'assaillant, tandis que l'assailli serait bloqué. Eh bien, jetons-nous ur lui, hardi, allons-y!

Ils étaient nez à nez, faces crispées, haïeuses, accrochés l'un à l'autre, se déchirant. Tout à coup, voulant terroriser son adversaire, le banquier lui cracha: "A l'échafaud, assassin!"

L'homme eut un instant de stupeur. Il murmura: "Crebleu, en voilà une histoire!" Puis, semblant faire effort pour comprendre: "Ah çà, dites donc, vous! ... pas d'erreur, hein, j'suis pas assassin, j'suis Godard!"

Le banquier recula d'un pas. C'était à son tour d'être stupéfait.

—Oui, Godard!... vous avez bien entendu, Godard, l'aéronaute!... Parti tantôt de l'usine à gaz de la Villette... tombé là dans les bois, tout près de la voie... Mon ballon crevé, mon aide deux côtes enfoncées—il est resté chez des charbonniers;—moi; j'ai pris une lan-

terne, couru le long du chemin de fer... attendu un train montant... fait des signaux—le ministre de la Guerre me donne droit de réquisition;—j'ai sauté sur le marchepied, cherché un wagon vide et voilà!... descendrai à Vernon, ramènerai un médecin. Mais, nom d'un bleu, si j'm'attendais à tomber sur un réchappé de Charenton!... heureusement qu'votre crise est passée, hein... ça vous prend-il souvent? j'ai cru que vous alliez m'étrangler!

Puis, changeant de ton et la voix courroucée:

—Maintenant, dites voir un peu qui vous êtes, car enfin... vous ne payez pas de mine!

Assez interloqué, l'autre balbutia:

—Je suis M. N...., banquier... à Elbeuf.

—Banquier?... Vous?... Eh bien! vrai, ils en ont des têtes à grimaces, les banquiers de votre pays... Après tout... bien possible!

Puis, éclatant de rire: "Banquier, banquier!... M'en serais pas douté... Il est vrai que... dame, pour sûr, j'en vois pas souvent... Montent pas en ballon, les banquiers!"



SOLACE

I strove to bury sorrow in a crowd,
And feared to sit with memory apart—
The world, I thought, should tutor us to feel
How light a thing it is to break one's heart.

But when I left the laughing, jesting throng,
Weary, embittered by the loneliness,
And sought the firelit silence—lo, Dear Heart,
Remembrance cheered me with your own caress!

JOAN BURLEIGH.

CONFESSIONS

By Josephine Dixon

"OH yes, I believe a wife should tell her husband everything.

I believe in it as a theory. According to popular superstition, it's the foundation of all marital bliss. It prevents surprises, and in a world so full of people ready to tell on each other, it's well for a wife to get in first with her confidences. But there are no inflexible rules—even the French infinitive submits itself to exceptions, and I can see no reason why this matter should be too arrogant for them. Of course, as you are just about to be married, you think there isn't anything under heaven that you will want to keep from Martin. That's as beautiful as a day in June, and I'm not saying a word against it, only the ingratitude of men is something incredible. If you can stay a little longer I'll tell you a story, a real, true story—one of the kind that serves to point a moral and adorn a Sunday-school book. You needn't use it as a working model if it doesn't suit you. I don't claim any virtue for it, except that it is true.

"You see, oh, best beloved, in the high off, far off times they got up a scheme to marry me. My sisters were all married, and my brothers, too, and father and mother were getting old. They needed sleep and rest and a quiet life, the doctors said, and you'd be surprised to know how little they got of them while I was home. Half the men in town were in the habit of coming to our house. They found there the delights of home, with all the comforts of the club. Father's cellars have always been above suspicion, and I can roll cigarettes jolly well. Mother was a delicious chaperon. She always sta-

tioned herself in a high, green settle by the fire, and with her white hair and her dull silks she was the most picturesque thing you ever saw, and there wasn't a man in the bunch that didn't worship her. She took it for granted they were all good and pure and noble, and as a matter of fact they were when they were with her; they talked seriously of ideals and mourned mysterious mistakes they had made, and crawled generally. But, finally, Richmond came along. He had an income, and he was respectable and as dignified as an undertaker. He was just the kind of a man mother would have liked to marry, so she decided I must marry him, and papa agreed, and I thought he would do as well as any one, and so we were married. He was overwhelmingly good to me. Indeed, he is the best husband in the world, I am sure, and I'm absurdly fond of him now, but I tell you *entre nous* it's been a cultivated taste. I suppose this getting to love one's husband is like learning to swim. It takes time, but you never forget it.

"The first year was frightfully dull. The wedding trip did very well, but the coming home without a single man at the station to meet me, and the house without a flower anywhere, and the evening with only Richmond reading his paper—I tell you, I thought of some desperate things. And when night after night passed, and not one of those men appeared, and when Richmond took to sulking for days after each ball, and finally began refusing all invitations, I nearly lost my mind. You see, all the old habit was on me, and I couldn't shake it. Every day when I

dressed for dinner I thought of the men who used to come in after, and the bridge and the music and the love-making, and the drives in the moonlight and the chafing-dish suppers, and when instead of that it was nothing but Richmond, always Richmond, for breakfast and luncheon and dinner and the theatre, I almost hated him.

"I wasn't a bit in love with the others, but it was not easy to pull up in such a hurry, and from a whole procession of uneasy men settle down to one who took it so beautifully for granted that I loved him, that he never troubled himself to inquire if I did. Then, he was so virtuous. He never went out in the evenings. He never forgot my allowance. He always seemed surprised if I didn't open his letters. He didn't have a thing to hide or to tell fibs about. You know how wicked the constant example of a virtuous person makes you. Well, I felt positively vicious. I fell into all sorts of dissipations, sewing and embroidery and solitaire and college settlements. I went in for music again, and practiced hours together. I began to have indigestion, and took to buying my suits ready-made. I got an appetite for problem novels and homes for fallen women. I subscribed to a circulating library and joined a woman's club, and, decidedly I was not fit when I met Reggy Tower. Do you remember him? He was a sweet child. He had a mind like mosquito netting, and his soul had been dipped in peroxide before he ever got hold of it. But he loved me. He told me so the first night I met him, and after he had said it he shied off as if he expected me to exterminate him. But I didn't, for that sort of thing sounded sweet, even from Reggy. I hadn't heard that timorous, anxious love-making for such an age, and it sounded as beautiful as New York English after you've been abroad a year. I felt as if I had come to life again, and it was with difficulty I could keep from throwing myself on his neck and weeping my gratitude. But I did the next thing, I—
—I encouraged him with all my might.

"Oh, don't look shocked. You

haven't been through the burnt district of the first year of married life.

"But, as I was saying, I just attached a nice little leading-string to Reggy, and you wouldn't believe how it relieved the monotony. Every day I telephoned for him, and he came up and said his little speech, and his eyes filled up and his voice got husky, and, oh, it was beautiful and reminiscent. He sent me flowers and he sang to me, and he quarreled with me charmingly, and I was beginning to feel my old self, when one day he announced he was going away. He sang Tosti's "Good-by"—they all do, you know—and he waivered over the last two lines until I felt as melancholy as an east wind. Then he took my hands, he wouldn't kiss them, he was so pure; and he told me that the parting was to be final—he would never see me again, or write to me, and all that, and he meant it, too—but is it the Bible or Shakespeare that says all flesh is grass?

"Well, after he was gone it was doleful enough for a few days. I missed him every hour. I had no one to run errands for me, no one to cut the magazines or to bring me the latest in golf sticks. When I went to the dress-maker's I had nothing ornamental to leave in charge of the auto. I longed for the candy and flowers; for whenever I said anything to Richmond about them, he just reached around to his pistol pocket and handed me a roll of bills. That doesn't do, you know. You want some one to go and select them and fuss about the box they are to be sent in and the ribbon with which they are to be tied.

"But, after a few days, a new sensation overtook me. It started in a vague, undefined idea that maybe I hadn't been as pious as I should have been. One's remorse is like one's wit, you know; it always comes too late. While I was with Reggy, I hadn't time to listen to conscience, and my compunctions came in by slow freight after he had gone. Then I recalled that I had heard married women shouldn't flirt. I began to wonder why they shouldn't.

"Gradually it dawned on me that it wasn't playing fair with one's husband.

You should have seen that idea wax and grow fat. You never appreciate wisdom and morality until you discover them for yourself. When I thought of Richmond I grew quite breathless with horror of the thing I had done. I recalled all that my mother had taught me of a wife's duty, and I pictured the lurid things she would think if she knew about Reggy. I called myself hard names, treacherous, false, perfidious and other things of whose exact meaning I was a little uncertain. I couldn't sleep for thinking of stories I had read about faithless wives, and I couldn't eat for Richmond's sad, accusing eyes. Of course, he wasn't suspicious of me, but his confidence was the one thing I couldn't stand. At night I would slip into his room and watch him snoring away so innocently, and I felt like a murderess. My conscience worked over-time and Sundays, and it wasn't used to it. I began to wonder if I hadn't better confess the whole business and get rid of it. Death or divorce was better than the grind of conscious guilt. And, moreover, there was the chance that Richmond would do the noble turn that stage husbands affect. Might he not gather me in his arms and forgive me grandly, kiss my tears away, and love me better for being so human? Of course I hadn't been in love with Reggy. One would as soon have fallen in love with a little, slick white rabbit. I assured myself of that all the time, but it didn't seem to be the point of the case. It was Richmond who was playing heavy leads in my tragedy.

"About this time Reggy wrote me a letter. What the little brute had to say I don't know, for I never read it. Richmond brought it up, and before he gave it to me he handed me the most stunning diamond sunburst you ever saw. That was the beginning of the end. I felt myself going. I couldn't have that sunburst on my guilty soul. The letter finished me. I saw the address in Reggy's writing, I saw Richmond's big, calm ox eyes as he handed it—all innocent and unsuspecting—to me, and I didn't even touch it. I knew it would

scorch me if I did. Instead, I howled:

"'Oh, Richmond, Richmond, forgive me!' and I landed square on his neck.

"Naturally, he was a bit startled, and he dropped the letter and tried to extricate himself. He thought it was the sunburst that had affected my mind, and he tried to be soothing.

"'It's nothing, nothing,' he said. 'I ought to have given it to you long before. I might have known you wanted it. Poor little girl!'

"He tried to untangle himself from my arms, but I hung on like a crab, and I unburdened my sinful soul. Weeping like a leaky roof, I wailed out the whole thing. I didn't spare a detail, and I worked some of them up to a picturesque finish that wasn't necessary. I simply turned my heart inside out to that man, and what do you suppose he did?

"Hugged me closer and kissed my tears away and loved me better for being so human?

"Not a bit of it.

"He sat me down on the couch with an emphasis that rattled my hairpins out. Then he took the tongs—the long brass ones—and picked the letter up and desposited it in the fire. Without a word he left me. He went to his room, packed his case and went off to the club. He stayed there two days, and there aren't any words to describe my state of mind during that time. On the morning of the third day, he came home and passed me in the hall as if we had never been introduced. He took his place at the end of the table and never spoke to me throughout the meal. His ferocity may be measured by the fact that he didn't care a rap what the servants thought. He remained in the house only long enough to get his meals and a few hours' sleep at night. And me? Well, I was a wreck. I didn't curl my hair, and I sat in a ready-made wrapper and cried for a week. I walked the floor of nights until I caught a beastly cold and had neuralgia and all sorts of things. Once I tried the melodramatic, and I tell you it was the real thing. I threw myself at his feet and I clung to his twenty-

five-dollar trousers so he couldn't get away, and Olga Nethersole herself couldn't put up a more harrowing bid for forgiveness than that one. But he just shook his legs and dropped me off as if I had been a speck of dust, and walked away. Another time I went into his room about daylight, and I fell down by his bed and cried out:

"If you don't forgive me and talk to me, I'll kill myself!"

"He sat up in bed—and I didn't even notice how unimpressive he looked in his nightshirt.

"There are some things worse than death," he said, sepulchraly, and laid his tousled head on the pillow again.

"These were the only words he vouchsafed me during that entire period, and it was the noisiest silence that any one ever maintained.

"I don't know how it might have ended if the crying and the lack of food

and the cold nights and the neuralgia hadn't combined to lay me out with some sort of fever. It made it quite touching, you see, for I went over the thing in considerable detail to the nurses and the doctors during the delirious stage, and I contracted a gaudy dislike of Richmond, so that they had to keep him out of the room for a while. If I had had it arranged to order, it couldn't have worked more effectively, for he got so interested in the fever chart and stomach tubes and absorbent cotton that he forgot all about Reggy. At least, he has never spoken his name since, and you may be sure I have him tucked away in the darkest corner of our skeleton closet.

"Oh, you are very sure that was my last flirtation, are you?"

"Well—maybe—I've forgotten about that, but I shouldn't mind making affidavit that it was my last confession."



THE GRASS

I rouse ere on the tree
 The south wind bloweth power;
 I come ere roves the bee,
 I go not with the flower.

I climb the April hill,
 I labor with the light;
 I toil with hope and will,
 I toil by day and night.

I crown the desert place,
 I edge the meadow stream,
 I look into love's face,
 And it doth feed her dream.

My lot with man is cast,
 I round him shi.e and wave,
 Nor fail him at the last:
 I lie upon his grave.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY.